

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Wednesday, September 2, 2009. I was up early for I have a long way to go. The limo picked me up at 5:45 am! The airport was easy and soon I was on the flight to Detroit. My seatmate was a businessman on his way to Tokyo for the "tea" business.

He was able to help me with my I-Phone. I have only owned this phone for two weeks and find it much different from my Blackberry, The ATT support doesn't even compare to the T-Mobile support so I have had a difficult learning curve. One good thing is that everyone I meet seems to know how it works so I have help at every turn.

In Detroit I walked to the Tokyo flight gate and found the lounge right across from it. There I found Dowell & Martha. Alta arrived soon after but since they wouldn't let her into the lounge we decamped to the gate. Soon we were boarding the flight.

I had picked the Detroit/Tokyo flight over the Atlanta/Tokyo flight because of a huge price difference. I worried that because of the price difference; this old Northwest flight would not be up to Delta's Elite service. I was wrong! First of all it was a 747. I had forgotten how roomy they were. I had a seat across the aisle from the Howards and no one was in front of me! This meant I had to give up my carryon for takeoff but after that it was just wonderful to not have someone drop his or her seat back making it difficult to get out of my seat. Also since there was no one beside me I had lots of room. The best part was that the seats are wider and reclined to almost flat. Being able to roll over onto my side meant I slept much easier.

The plane is less than half full reflecting the big drop in travel. Back in coach Alta had her choice of seats. Most of the people in business were Japanese.

Thursday, September 3. We landed at Narita Airport, Tokyo. On arrival I was met by a wheelchair and taken to the lounge. They couldn't issue the Manila boarding pass so the kind lady pusher took me back down to Northwest Passenger Service so I could get my pass. Then she took me back to the lounge. I couldn't find Dowell although I walked the length of it. One feature of this lounge is the large number of big screen Macintosh computers lining the wall and granting free access. I went online and checked out my mail. Then I walked through the lounge once more to see if I could find Dowell. At last I had him paged. I don't know how I missed him on my walks. It was important to find him for he had my carryon bag.

After four hours we boarded the flight for Manila. This flight was full. All I wanted to do was sleep. Managed to stay awake for dinner and then curled up to sleep. One man in business went berserk when the person in front of him laid his seat back. He yelled and hit the offending seat. When the stewardess tried to calm him down, he threw something at her. She threatened handcuffs but at last succeeded in moving him to another seat. It still didn't keep me from sleeping most of the way.

We were met in Manila and transferred to the Pan Pacific Hotel<sup>1</sup>. This is one of the highest ranked hotels of the world and deserves its reputation! A bath felt so good after 25 hours of travel!

Friday September 4. Somehow the alarm in our room clock had been set for 8:00. Feeling pretty good, Alta and I decided to get up and get breakfast. A magnificent buffet on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor had every kind of breakfast to satisfy Japanese, Germans, Chinese and American appetites. Then we consulted with our butler, Allan, about taking a Manila City Tour in the afternoon. We went back to our floor and joined Martha and Dowell for their breakfast and then booked a tour to the Taal volcano for tomorrow.

We set out to find an ATM to change some money. The first one would not accept my card but at the second one I got 4000 pesos that turned out to be worth \$81.84. This seemed the maximum it would give but I don't imagine we have much to pay for.

The Howards went to the nearby mall to find a parka for Alta who has come on the trip with only 14 pounds of luggage! The 14 pounds includes her hair straightener! We are restricted to 22 pounds in Papua New Guinea and my duffel is pretty close to the maximum, but then any piece of my clothing is probably 3 times hers!

---

<sup>1</sup>[http://www2.panpacific.com/manila/Overview.html?\\_\\_utma=51994664.1222062487.1253534240.1253534240.1253534240.1&\\_\\_utmb=51994664.1.10.1253534240&\\_\\_utmc=51994664&\\_\\_utmz=51994664.1.1.utmcsr=google|utmccn=\(organic\)|utmcmd=organic|utmctr=pan%20pacific%20hotel%20manila&\\_\\_utmv=&\\_\\_utm=195681256](http://www2.panpacific.com/manila/Overview.html?__utma=51994664.1222062487.1253534240.1253534240.1253534240.1&__utmb=51994664.1.10.1253534240&__utmc=51994664&__utmz=51994664.1.1.utmcsr=google|utmccn=(organic)|utmcmd=organic|utmctr=pan%20pacific%20hotel%20manila&__utmv=&__utm=195681256)

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A woman guide named Gerry took us on a city tour. We set out in some of the worst traffic I have ever seen. There are no stop signs on the minor streets so it is everyone for himself! Gerry explained that the Philippines<sup>2</sup> were named for King Philip the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Spain. Ethnically the Filipinos are a mixture many different races, and their language has words from Chinese, Arabic, and English. It is called Tagalog (The emphasis is on the first syllable). There are also many dialects. The Spanish occupation lasted for over 300 years (1565-1898) but they did not try and make the natives talk Spanish. They did manage to convert many of the islanders to Catholicism. Gerry says her Spanish is very rusty since she seldom uses it. The Americans came in 1905 and were here until the Japanese occupied the Philippines during WW2. and the people learned English in 30 years and today a lot of them still speak English. Road signs are in English. There are many islands in the archipelago. Manila is on Luzon<sup>3</sup>, the largest and economically most important island. It is a poor country and there is an overpopulation who flock to the cities and end up in squatter ghettos. There are many young people trying to sell you something or even beg. It is hard to resist their pleas but if you give to one the result will be a whole hive of others wanting the same thing.

Manila is actually 16 different cities. While Gerry was explaining all this Ruaul, the driver, was fighting the traffic but at last we came to Forbes<sup>4</sup>, the richest part of Manila. The Spaniard who originally owned the land sold parcels to rich Filipinos who then built mansions. Businesses followed them, but they were only given leases on their plots. At the end of 15 years the land reverted to the grantor who would tear down the old building and sell the land to someone who would build an even taller one. As a result there are now plenty of skyscrapers. Gerry calls it "Our Wall Street".

We stopped at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial<sup>5</sup> where 17,202 of our service men rest who gave their lives in the Philippines and New Guinea during World War 11. The crosses lined up with military precision always move me. There are 25 mosaic maps displayed showing the battles of the Pacific during WW2.

We then went to the walled city, Intramuros<sup>6</sup>, built by the Spaniards on the southern bank of the Pasig River. Unfortunately much of it was destroyed during the bombings in WW2 but some has been restored. In one area we saw Spanish architecture and the lovely San Agustin Church<sup>7</sup> with its carved 17<sup>th</sup> century doors. Completed in 1607 it is the oldest church in the Philippines that is still standing. During the Japanese occupation it was used as a concentration camp for prisoners. Many of these hostages died during the three-week long Battle of Manila<sup>8</sup>, considered the worst urban fighting in the Pacific Theater. Fortunately only the roof of the church was destroyed in the battle.

Our last stop in Intramuros was old Fort Santiago<sup>9</sup>. It was once the site of the palace of Ralph Suleiman in pre-Hispanic Manila. It was destroyed by the conquistadors who replaced it with a fort in 1571. The original fort of log structures and earth walls was not strong enough to protect Manila from the Chinese pirates and so in 1589 the fort was rebuilt with hard stone. It was finished in 1592. Today the fort is shielded by 22 feet high walls that are eight feet thick. During World War 11 it was captured by the Japanese and sustained heavy damage in the Battle of Manila in February 1945. It was restored during the 1980s. We were shown where the old barracks had been and also the dungeon, underground cells where the Japanese killed Filipinos by locking them up at low tide knowing the high tide would drown them. Their motive was to save their bullets!

A huge cross marks the spot where 600 of these prisoners were buried in a mass grave and next to it is another marker commemorating many more. We looked out over the polluted Pasig River where a man in a dugout was capturing cans for recycling.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines>

<sup>3</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luzon>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2007/0723/158.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/ml.php>

<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intramuros,\\_Manila](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intramuros,_Manila)

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Agustin\\_Church,\\_Manila](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Agustin_Church,_Manila)

<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Manila\\_%281945%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Manila_%281945%29)

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort\\_Santiago](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Santiago)

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Then it was back to the hotel. The jet leg finally caught up with me and I lay down on the bed and slept two hours. We have turned our clock 12 hours.

For dinner we went into the mall adjoining the hotel and found a Japanese restaurant. Here I tried the ebo tempura<sup>10</sup>, wonderful huge shrimp with some vegetables delicately fried. I also tried the Yakitori<sup>11</sup>. When John & I used to get this dish at a favorite Japanese bar it was skewered chicken pieces broiled on a stick. So was this but they used the whole chicken, gizzards, liver et al. It was delicious.

Saturday, September 5. We had signed up for an all day excursion south of Manila to see Taal Volcano. Gerry was again our guide and we had acquired another tourist, Gary, who was a contract worker working for the US Embassy.

First stop was the factory where they make the colorful jeepneys<sup>12</sup>. The jeepneys are mobile works of art that clog the streets of Manila. The word jeepney is derived from its original name "jeep my honey". When the Americans pulled out in 1945, an enterprising mechanic bought many jeeps, extended the axle and turned them into a sort of open-air bus. In the factory we saw one of the original jeeps, and some of the original jeepneys. There was also an elaborate carriage. Nowadays many of the jeepneys have aluminum bodies and apparently this is because the parts now come from the junkyards of Japan where stainless steel cars were a fad.

Our next stop was the charming adobe stone Parish Church of St. Joseph in Las Pinas<sup>13</sup>. Fr. Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen constructed an organ made entirely out of bamboo. He buried the bamboo in the sand near the sea so it would cure. It took eight years to build finishing in 1824. A typhoon followed by an earthquake destroyed the roof of the church in the 1880s and made the organ unplayable. In 1972 the organ was shipped to Germany where it was completely restored. It returned to Manila the following year. Someone played a piece for us and it really sounded good. There is even a stop that produces a birdsong! Only the trumpet stops are made from metal.

As we drove further south, Gerry mentioned that there used to be rice paddies where development has occurred. We did see some pineapples being grown, but very little countryside is left.

As we headed up into the mountains the weather got worse and worse until it was pouring rain. This is the tail end of a typhoon. We arrived in Tagaytay<sup>14</sup>, which is on the edge of an ancient caldera. In the caldera are Taal Lake and an island containing Taal Volcano<sup>15</sup>. Taal is an active volcano, part of the Pacific ring of fire<sup>16</sup>. We could dimly see it in the fog. We had a buffet lunch at Josephine's Restaurant<sup>17</sup>, and then waited for the weather to lift so we could get a view of the island. It soon became evident that we would not get our wish and we headed back to Manila.

We made one more stop to try the civet cat coffee<sup>18</sup>. Wild cats eat the coffee beans but the kernel passes through virtually intact. It is washed and presented as a special coffee treat. I tasted it but found it somewhat bitter. It is considered the most expensive coffee in the world and people worry that the civet cat known as Cordillera as motit is endangered and without it this coffee cannot be made.

The traffic became very congested and our driver had a terrible time weaving through it. I was happy to finally get back to the hotel. I packed and took an hour-long nap and then we were loaded into the hotel van for the trip to the airport, I hate to leave for the Pan Pacific Hotel has been delightful. I would like to take Allen my favorite butler with me.

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempura>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.cyberkitchen.com/ubbs/archive/ASIAN/Chicken\\_Grilled\\_Chicken\\_Yakatori.html](http://www.cyberkitchen.com/ubbs/archive/ASIAN/Chicken_Grilled_Chicken_Yakatori.html)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.thingsasian.com/stories-photos/2554>

<sup>13</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las\\_Pi%C3%B1as\\_Bamboo\\_Organ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las_Pi%C3%B1as_Bamboo_Organ)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.tagaytay.com/>

<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taal\\_Volcano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taal_Volcano)

<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific\\_Ring\\_of\\_Fire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Ring_of_Fire)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.josephinerestaurant.com/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/regions/view/20081119-172990/Motit-excites-Cordillera-coffee-lovers>

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

At the airport Air Niugini kindly gave us a pass so Alta could join us in the business class lounge and we spent a relaxing time uploading Alta's pictures to Facebook and mine to Smugmug. They were not edited but I can do that later.

It's a five-hour flight to Port Moresby and I skipped dinner in order to get as much sleep as possible. The seats were not all that comfortable but I did manage to sleep most of the way.

Sunday, September 6. We got to Port Moresby<sup>19</sup>, the capital of Papua New Guinea<sup>20</sup> about five in the morning. Papua New Guinea is such a mouthful it is usually referred to as PNG and I will refer to it this way. I made a quick trip to an ATM in the airport and got 500 kina for \$191.78 when I punched in the highest cash advance allowed.

Steven from Trans Niugini Tours<sup>21</sup> (Journey's International local agent) met us. Trans Niugini turned out to be a very efficient well-organized operation and I would not hesitate to book directly with them if I were to return to PNG. Steven took us to the elegant Airways Hotel<sup>22</sup> where we had a day room for the four of us. Since we all had to repack to be sure each of our baggage met the 22 pound weight requirements and there were four of us showering and so forth it was not all that restful but I thank Martha and Dowell for treating us to this. I did manage a short nap and then we all went up to the lovely pool and in the Deli had a chicken bagel sandwich without the lettuce! We have been warned to not eat any fruits of vegetables unless they are cooked or we peel them ourselves.

Steven picked us up and returned us to the airport where we checked in for the flight to Mount Hagen. We have acquired another couple in our group: Heidi and Hilgil Mettendorfer who are from Graz, Austria. She apologizes for her English but Martha and Dowell can communicate with them in German. Airport security was so lax they even let me bring my water bottle through!

It's about an hour flight to Mount Hagen<sup>23</sup> (pronounced Ha-gen). We flew over some rugged mountains. The airport was small but I noticed Hertz & Avis were here. Tom would have liked that the baggage was delivered with a tractor and forklift. We were soon loaded into a huge four-wheel drive vehicle for the hour-long drive up a twisty mountain road to the Rondon Ridge Lodge<sup>24</sup>. For the first time we started encountering the PNG wave for everyone smiles and waves to you. White people are still a curiosity in this part of the world.

The scenery was fascinating. Lots of people were out enjoying this Sunday. We saw loose pigs and houses made of straw matting. Harold pointed out some coffee trees and there were small gardens of vegetables. The soil is very rich here.

Our hotel is at 7100 feet of altitude and has a magnificent view over the Wahgi Valley below. The lodge is attractively decorated with native artifacts, as is our room. We have a four-foot tall statuette designed to scare away evildoers. Our room is large enough to have a sleeping and sitting area down by the patio. Its only disadvantage is that there is a long staircase from it up to the main lodge. In the thin air, I huffed and puffed my way up the 40 steps and enjoyed looking at the artifacts in the gift shop before dinner. We had pumpkin soup followed by delicious chicken and vegetables and ice cream for desert. Then it was early to bed for our 8 am start tomorrow.

Monday, September 7, 2009. We set out in a much more modest vehicle than the one that met us at the airport, although it still had four-wheel drive. Joseph was our driver and Raymond Numbi our guide. Raymond's smell was overwhelming for he needed a bath, but other than that he knew his stuff. After a brief stop in Mount Hagen for Hilgil to get an adapter, we took the Highlands Highway south out of town. No road connects us to Port Moresby, the capital, but this road built by the Germans during their occupation prior to WW1, connects to the cities of Lae and Madang. The road was pretty good except for one place where a character named One-piece had destroyed it so he could get fees for helping people navigate it. We crossed the Wahgi Valley and Raymond explained that he cannot understand the people here and must talk pidgin with

---

<sup>19</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port\\_Moresby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Moresby)

<sup>20</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua\\_New\\_Guinea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua_New_Guinea)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.pngtours.com/index2.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.airways.com.pg/>

<sup>23</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Hagen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Hagen)

<sup>24</sup> <http://travel.mapsofworld.com/papua-new-guinea/mount-hagen-hotels/rondon-ridge.html>

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

them. There are 800 languages spoken in New Guinea. In East Sepik province alone there are 70 languages. Raymond also said that he was afraid to go beyond the mountains for he did not know anything about the tribes who lived there!

We drove two hours to Mindiva in the Kundiawa Area. This is really three small villages. It was suggested we walk from one to another but that would have been very difficult for me on the rocky steep paths that doubled for roads. Thus Joseph drove me in style and the others walked. I was in need of a bathroom and was shown into a mat covered shelter pit stop, "a long drop", as the natives called it. Unfortunately on the way out I managed to pull down the palm frond door!

Then the "Mudmen"<sup>25</sup> gave us a performance. Decorated in mud they enacted some legends from their heritage such as making a fire and looking for honey. Then demon Mudmen came and killed one child but the medicine man cured it. Then another died and the Mudmen demons carried it away. We then had the compulsory bazaar and I bought a soapstone pendant with a Mudman on it.

At the next village there were the Skeleton men, and the painted job was so good it really looked like they were skeletons. They put on a skit about killing the Oma Masali monster, which was entertaining. The outlandish costumes of both villages were designed to frighten away one's enemies.

We then broke for shopping and pictures with the cast. The chief's son was very cute. About two years old he shook hands with everyone, including his father. We had our picnic lunch in the gathering hut with rough benches around the side and a mat covered table with a carved snake for decoration.

At the third village we saw more folklore that showed how a bride is negotiated. I also wanted another pit stop before the long drive home and one man led me by the hand through the village to the long drop and stood with his back to me while I took advantage. The PNG people are so friendly they say "thank you" when you take their picture. It is hard to believe that there is still clan rivalry. However the country is only two generations away from cannibalism.

Raymond doesn't approve of these villages since they marry among each other. In his village they must marry from another tribe. He does not have a wife but he is saving for his bride's piece. Joseph had three wives, but one divorced him. This is costly for each has to have her own house and garden.

Then it was a long drive home. While there were others at the hotel last night, tonight there were only the six of us. We had a delicious fish dish for the main course and what seems to be standard ice cream for desert.

Tuesday, September 8. Our excursion took us to Wurup, where Joseph, our driver lives. He is of the Roni tribe. This district seemed wealthier and tidier than the area we visited yesterday.

We went to Mem village. In one shelter we saw how they sleep under a woven mat at night. The showed us how they make the irrigation trenches for their gardens and planted some sweet potatoes. It was pointed out that this was woman's work but the women were away. Then they climbed a twisted post sort of ladder to tie palm fronds around the fruit. This is supposed to create bigger bananas. It was surprising how much they could grow on a small plot of land. We were told they have no way to tell time. When a child is born a banana seedling is planted with the placenta. When the plant is ready to bear they know the child is a year old. A more permanent tree is planted so the child can estimate his age as he grows up.

I liked our second stop, Takua, the best. A small plot of land had been laid out like a jungle garden. We were met by the traditional welcome dance. Why this is called a welcome dance I do not know for the dancer carries a bow and arrow pointed at you! We looked in a house to see how they make a fire. In another house Chief Noki demonstrated the courtship process. This is no longer done for many of today's young couples took it a bit further than is traditional. AIDS is now a big problem.

At the rear of the garden they had two caged animals. While I hate to see animals in a cage it is probably the only chance we will have to see a tree kangaroo<sup>26</sup> and the PNG cuscus<sup>27</sup>. There was

---

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.essortment.com/all/mudmenpaupanew\\_rtsh.htm](http://www.essortment.com/all/mudmenpaupanew_rtsh.htm)

<sup>26</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tree-kangaroo>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Possum>

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

a pet toucan that did not look like any I have seen before. The flora and fauna of PNG is unique and more closely affiliated with Australia than any place else. New Guinea split off from Australia millennia ago and tectonic plates carried it north.

We looked in the Men's house to see the men palavering about dear knows what and then they set off to make war or something. At length the handsome chief made a long speech telling us how grateful he was we had come and to please tell our friends to come and meet them. This is such a polite country and flowery speeches such as this were almost embarrassing.

We had lunch in the gathering room and nearby used the convenience. Lo and behold this "long drop" had a seat! As I said I liked our second stop the best.

At the third stop we were shown how they process the coffee and then in the back yard were invited to a mumu. This is a traditional way to prepare a feast and in many ways resembles the lobster bakes in Maine. They make a hole and line it with stones that have been heated in the fire. Then they add food, in this case sweet potatoes, which are a large part of the native diet. The whole thing is covered with palm leaves and in two hours the thing is done. The couple peeled back the leaves and invited us to try.

Our last stop was at the St. John De La Sale School that Joseph had attended. Classes were over but there were still children around. The holiday starts this weekend. The children were fascinated that white men had come to their school.

The children are taught their own language first but start learning English in the fourth grade. There was a list of English vocabulary words in the fourth grade room. I don't know what "fowe" meant! They are encouraged to use Pidgin<sup>28</sup> if they don't speak English. Pidgin comes as close to a national language as they have in PNG.

It was a lovely day.

Wednesday, September 9. We left at 7:45 for the airport. Our charter craft was designed to hold 10 passengers but we had to carry a lot of freight. We were packed in with all the food and freight. Dowell got to ride in the co-pilots seat. The flight took about 40 minutes and was over and through rugged mountains. At times it looked like we could almost reach out and touch them. At last we came down out of the clouds to land on the grassy strip of Karawari. The flight back to Mount Hagen had no passengers but a lot of freight was waiting. A number of huge carvings and even a table shaped like a crocodile were going somewhere. This must be costing someone a bundle for the freight on even a small package is \$350.

We walked a muddy road down to the river where a scow was waiting to take us to the lodge. We are really in the jungle. Breadfruit and palm trees crowd the riverbank and Chris Nick, our guide pointed out wild sugar cane, which is not sweet and looks like tall grasses.

The Karawari Lodge<sup>29</sup> sits on a bank high above the Karawari River that is a tributary of the Sepik River. We can see for miles from our porch. Our room is complete with mosquito netting and it is very humid and hot. I am happy our tour does not go until 3:30.

We had lovely light lasagna for lunch and then a siesta.

At 3:30 it had cooled a bit and we took the launch up river to Kundiman #2 village. This is the Yoquam tribe. The last census showed 100 voting age adults so this is a much bigger village than we saw before. The houses are all up on stilts. This is supposed be the dry season but there has been much rain. Kids climb out on the rain tree limbs to jump into the river. The missionaries who wanted shade introduced the rain tree and they are shaped like huge parasols.

We are here to learn about sago<sup>30</sup>. This palm is an important part of their diet. First a man has to chop down the tree. Then he has to peel the bark off to display the pulp. He mashes it with a heavy pole. His wife came and took the pulp in a woven basket made from pandanus<sup>31</sup> to wash and strain it into a small dugout canoe. Then the mixture is allowed to settle which may take several hours.

---

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.june29.com/HLP/lang/pidgin.html>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.pngtours.com/lodge2.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sago>

<sup>31</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandanus\\_tectorius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandanus_tectorius)

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

We were shown how they make pancakes. The pulp is poured into ceramic cooking vessel similar to a wok. It cooks quickly and is then turned over. We were invited to try the finished product. I started to cough probably from the smoke so it was not so great.

To make pudding she poured the boiling water from another pot over the mash and it instantly turned into pudding. This is their basic diet supplemented by what they can catch in the river and vegetables from the garden. Although there are chickens running around, their diet is short of protein.

We walked on down through the village pausing to chat with a man who was on the porch with much of his large family. It even included the family cat! He, Chris, is the “Councilor” of the village, an elected official. He told us how happy he was that we had come to see his village.

Further on we saw a spirited basketball game in progress. I then checked out the “shopping” and bought a lovely little crocheted basket known as a bilum<sup>32</sup> which will be so much lighter than my pack to carry my necessities around. It cost me 50 kina or about \$20.

I was getting tired so climbed back on the launch to wait the others. A rooster with two hens came along and jumped into the log the first man had opened. They were so happy to find this special scratch!

Back at the lodge I determined to wash my hair and shower but there was no cold water and the hot water was very hot. Martha had to come and help me rinse the soap out. The big problem was that I still feel hot and sweaty but at least I have a clean head and clothes.

Before dinner, Chris gave a lecture describing the one legged figure hanging on the wall. It is called Kamanggabi<sup>33</sup>. They are thought to house spirits with magical powers. This is the good luck spirit. There is also a female good luck god and she has two legs. Smaller versions of the carving are called Yipwon<sup>34</sup> and can be carried to bring good luck to hunting, including head hunting or traveling.

As well as being a guide, Chris is a master carver and is proud that the hotel bought his figures for the permanent collection there. The original Good Luck spirits that the old tribes had are hidden away in a cave in the mountains.

Thursday, September 10. We got up at dawn to go for an hour long birding tour in the jet boat. It is lovely and cool in the early morning. We saw egrets and the whistling kite<sup>35</sup>, a very colorful bird. We also saw the twelve-wired bird of paradise<sup>36</sup> twice but he was so far away we had to use binoculars to see him well. We could hear the squawk of parrots but they also were hard to see. There were loads of butterflies as well.

After breakfast we set out on an all-day trip. We left the Karawari River and entered a tributary called the Arifundi River. Right at the entrance was Yimas Village #2. This is the Karim tribe. Because of the rain there was flooding but they had put boards across the wet so we could get to a house. All the houses are on stilts because of the flooding problem. This large home held three generations of a family. It was one big open room with all the mats, nets, and foods, even the Kamanggabi, hung from the roof or under the rafter. The lady of the house had a fire on a metal pan on which to cook and it was moveable. It was important to move it about the room for the smoke made the thatch wood less pervious to rot. One lady was making a mat. Outside I bought a small Yipwon to carry while I am traveling.

The Sepik River<sup>37</sup> system is one of the largest in the world and it is fascinating to see the people coming and going in their dugouts. They paddle these flimsy boats standing up so their balance must be very good. Everyone seems to know how to swim. Two dugouts were loaded with hunting dogs. Their owners were off to find so wild pigs. One motorized large dugout was laden with freight. It is a day’s paddle downstream and then a five-hour bus ride to get to a town. Coming back upstream takes much longer.

---

<sup>32</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilum>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/new-guinea-kamanggabi-figure-karawari-river>

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/10/ocm/ho\\_1978.412.854.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/10/ocm/ho_1978.412.854.htm)

<sup>35</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistling\\_Kite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistling_Kite)

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.pbse.com/image/22065970>

<sup>37</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sepik>

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The villages are self-sufficient but must go to town to get clothing and mosquito netting. The boys seem to run around naked until they are seven or eight. The little girls are sometimes seen naked or they wear a palm frond skirt. We do not see as many girls and assume they are helping their mothers.

We got to Yomas Village #1, but they were not expecting us. I went ashore to see the bazaar but did not climb the steep hill to see where they were building a new spirit house. During WW2, Japanese soldiers were here and the old spirit house was bombed. They are just now getting around to building the new one. Also on the hill were the "blood stones" which the ancient tribes brought with them from the mountains. The blood of their slain enemies is poured on the stone to make them harmless.

We stopped at a deserted fishing camp to make a pit stop, except there was no pit. Girls went one way, boys the other. Then we went on to the large but shallow lake that fed the river and had a picnic lunch while we drifted in the breeze. As we left the lake we were met by 5 or 6 dugouts full of ladies, dressed in the traditional clothes and makeup supposedly on their way to go fishing. They were obviously enjoying themselves, even one old grandmother who sat in one dugout.

Our last stop was at Tangamimbit Village. This is a newer village started in the 1960s by the Kumbrop tribe who came from the mountains. They speak a language no one can understand but also pidgin. We are here to see their Men's house, which is full of ancient artifacts so that they can teach the children their traditions. Men's house and spirit house seem to be synonymous. Boys when they reach puberty are brought here for the manhood rites. Half the town stood around watching while Chris showed us the good luck gods, the skulls of past enemies and even models of dugouts elaborately painted in the old ways. A huge wooden drum was also here.

I slipped getting back in the jet boat and was covered with mud. Martha promised to do my laundry when we got back to the Lodge. I don't know what I would do without the Howard family to help me out!

A tour of nine has arrived. They are on their way to the annual festival at Goroka<sup>38</sup>. They did not seem a happy group and I learned many had been sick. I am glad we are not with them.

After dinner the Karawari Lodge Bamboo Band came to entertain us, all in traditional and colorful dress. They had a most amazing drum that consisted of some forty-bamboo pipes stacked in two piles. Hitting it with rubber flip-flop soles played it. Their teacher, Lucy Mari, was from the islands. She teaches 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the highest level. She got Martha up to dance and then I joined them until I got winded. Alta claims she has no sense of rhythm.

Friday September 11. It was somewhat confusing with the guests going on three differed itineraries but at last we were transferred to the Sepik Spirit, which had come up river to pick us up. The Sepik River<sup>39</sup> is considered the third largest river in the world in terms of the amount of water that flows through it. With all of its tributaries it turns 30,000 square miles into a huge swamp. This is an area almost as big as South Carolina.

We met some of the other travelers. John and Nancy Swayne live between Westchester, PA and Wilmington, DE. She grew up in Wayne as did I but she is much younger than I am so we did not seem to have friends in common. John Fairfull, the cruise director told us about the ship facilities and then we were ushered to our stateroom to unpack. After four days without, I found the air-conditioning hard to get used to.

As we sailed I went up to the wheelhouse where the three grandmothers got acquainted. We had met Jane Burgess earlier. She is traveling alone from Brisbane, Australia and this is her first trip since she lost her husband. Doreen Holliday is from Albuquerque and she is traveling with one of her daughters, Linda. She is also eight-one (I am older by 6 months) and she has 6 great grandsons. They both seem enjoyable travel mates.

After lunch they announced a village stop to see the inside of a house but since I had already done that and it was threatening rain, I elected to stay aboard and had a restful afternoon catching up this journal.

---

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.gorokashow.com/>

<sup>39</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sepik>



## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

John and Joe, our guide, gave a talk on the culture of this area before dinner and after dinner there was a BBC documentary on the origins of New Guinea and particularly the abundance of fish in the reefs surrounding it.

Saturday, September 12. No one knew what to expect. All we knew was that it was the first Middle Sepik Cultural show. We jet boated about an hour up the river. Clumps of water hyacinths<sup>40</sup> floated in the water and there were many egrets their big white bodies standing out amidst the reeds of wild sugar cane. We saw Pied Herons<sup>41</sup> and the small White Terns<sup>42</sup>. There were also many dugouts headed the same way as we were going to the festival. Each dugout or village we come upon is an automatic "no wake" zone so our progress was in fits and starts. I even saw one trimaran<sup>43</sup> dugout!

When we arrived we climbed up a muddy staircase and then walked about a half hour into Palembangi for the festival. Just before the village we walked a bridge, which was nothing more than a tree felled and outfitted with bamboo handrails to cross a stream.

The affair reminded me of a Native American powwow. The long mall seemed to have three stages for the dancers and there were smaller areas in between. We learned 17 villages had come for the party bringing their native costumes and trading goods. It was very colorful. I spotted a carving I liked and bought though I may regret it before I get it home for it is too large to fit in my suitcase. Fortunately I have many people to help carry it. The carver was so polite and thanked me for buying his carving. He is from the Chambri Lakes region<sup>44</sup>. I am told it is a Saun mask. Few masks are worn over the face, which explains the lack of holes for eyes.

After a time they made room for me so I could sit on my cane chair in the shade of the reviewing stand. Then the speeches began and they went on for what seemed forever. The prime minister had flown in by helicopter and told of the progress still to come under his administration (they are still waiting for some of the promises he made before his reelection). The cultural Minister talked about how important it was to maintain their traditions. There will be a Lower Sepik show next year. He also hopes this one will be even bigger! It got hotter and hotter and the sweat was pouring down my face. All this time, one tribe stood in the hot sun facing the reviewing stand not moving a muscle. This was the first time I had seen any penis gourds. Unlike Irian Java where the penis gourds are comically long, these were still large but more practical to wear. Most were of woven straw. This tribe also wore nothing under their costume while some of the others wore boxer shorts. Some of the women had fashioned a sort of bra but others did not bother. Papua New Guinea is changing very quickly and I fear the tourist in five years time will see very little of their traditional ways. And still the politicians talked!

When they finally stopped we walked over to the big Spirit house. The sacred objects of the tribe are kept here. Outside were the bloodstones where the enemy heads were chopped off. Boys are brought here for the initiation rites of manhood that can include cutting designs in their back to resemble the bite of the crocodile. There is always a fire burning in the spirit house, a sort of perpetual flame to honor the ancestors. High benches of bamboo are on each side and they are segregated as to what clan (or extended family group) sits where. We climbed a ladder to the upper floor and here were all manner of trade goods as well as the sacred objects.

We then walked to the smaller spirit house passing the remains of an earlier one that had been destroyed during the Japanese occupation. The tribe that was using this house kept marching in and out as they performed their dance. We watched them play the sacred flutes and drums and then were invited to climb to the upper story. Doreen, Jane and I declined and waited below. All of a sudden, police escort in tow, in came Prime Minister Sir Thomas Michael Somare<sup>45</sup>. Politician that he was he stopped to shake our hands and welcome us to his country. I have never shaken hands with a head of state before!

---

<sup>40</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water\\_hyacinth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_hyacinth)

<sup>41</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pied\\_Heron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pied_Heron)

<sup>42</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_Tern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Tern)

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.google.com/products?q=trimaran&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=wf>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.art-pacific.com/artifacts/nuguinea/sepikriv/sepikmid/chambri.htm>

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.polymernotes.org/biographies/PNG\\_bio\\_somare.htm](http://www.polymernotes.org/biographies/PNG_bio_somare.htm)

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

And so we left the coolness of the spirit house and started back to the boat. It seemed hotter than ever and the sun was really beating down on the trail. I found I had to stop frequently to catch my breath and let my heart stop beating so hard. I really thought I was going to die. However the wonderful Howard family kept encouraging me, carrying all my gear and even holding my umbrella over my head. However, it still must have taken an hour to make the walk. I felt so apologetic to the others who were waiting in the hot boat.

We had our picnic lunch and then visited another village but I did not get out of the jet boat. It was wonderful to get back to the Sepik Spirit and the creature comforts of showers and air conditioning.

Jane bought a bottle of wine and invited me to share along with Alta and Captain John. We laughed and laughed our way through dinner.

Sunday September 13. We visited Kaminibit Village 1 and 2. The spirit house in Village 1 was interesting in that the rafters were brightly painted and there was a large wicker boar suspended on a platform above the ceremonial drums. It was part of a costume worn by two men. In both villages we saw where they were raising baby crocodiles. In village #1 we were taken to see what the women did. All in native costume they were weaving baskets and mats, making the cute straw animals for sale and so forth. Alta bought a huge woven bag being made by one lady. Her husband is the Spirit's night watchman so it will be delivered later today when finished. She needs it to carry all the wonderful things she has bought.

At village number 2 we were treated to a "flute" dance. This village won first prize at Goroka in 2002 and was the one honored to stand in front of the prime minister during his speech. This flute dance was different from the one they did at the culture show. It is usually done at the boy's initiation into manhood. They were very good and I could see why they won the prize!

After lunch we jet boated about an hour down the river to Tambanum. This is known as the arts village. Here the shopping mall must have been a quarter mile long. It was all rather overwhelming and I couldn't help but wonder where were the people who would buy all this stuff. We are doing our part but it doesn't even make a dent in it.

I looked and then went back to the boat. I had bought my Timbouci mask at Karawari Lodge. Martha, Jane and I polished off my wine bottle at dinner and then it was time to pack.

Monday, September 14. There is bad weather in Goroka so our plane to Tari is late. We sat around the Spirit's lounge until after 10. John treated us to snacks from a huge fresh water prawn he bought from some local fishermen. It looked like a lobster but wasn't nearly as tasty.

Three of our number left early on a four-seat plane. They finally announced the bigger plane was ready so we were ferried across the river to where there was a small mission and a grass airstrip. We flew across spectacular mountains to Tari<sup>46</sup>, home of the Huli people. Here we landed on a paved strip and a "wigman" baggage handler hustled our bags to the waiting van. It was about an hour to drive to the Ambua lodge. This stretch of the Highland Highway is not paved but it is in better shape than what is around Mount Hagen.

The Ambua Lodge<sup>47</sup> is a series of "native" huts with spectacular views grouped around a central lodge. I knew I was in trouble when I counted 58 steps down, mostly without railing to 12D. As I was climbing my way back out Martha came to my rescue with first a strong arm to cling to and then she arranged for Alta and me to move to a closer room. The elevation here is only 5000 but there is a distinct lack of oxygen.

After lunch everyone headed off to view a waterfall but I stayed in the lodge with my Kindle<sup>48</sup> and then watched two interesting BBC videos. One was about the birds of paradise and had lovely shots of their mating practices. The other was footage about a first contact with one of the remote tribes. They thought the white men were the ghosts of their ancestors! Perhaps this is why we sometimes hear the excited call "white man" as we pass by.

Finally after two hours our room was ready. It was only 34 steps down and had a railing the whole way! Very secluded it was surrounded by a stockade fence and a private garden. Triple

---

<sup>46</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tari,\\_Papua\\_New\\_Guinea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tari,_Papua_New_Guinea)

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.babs.com.au/ambua/index.htm>

<sup>48</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon\\_Kindle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_Kindle)

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

dead bolts made us feel very secure. From the extra furniture, even books on the shelves we concluded we had been given the hotel managers room, which accounted for the long time making it ready for us.

The four of us had a fun cocktail hour with John, Nancy and Jane, dinner, and went to bed.

Tuesday, September 15, 2009. We are taken by bus to three villages. At the first, Tigibi, the Huli tribe<sup>49</sup> put on a Sing sing for us<sup>50</sup>. Sing sing is a term for a musical performance. Elaborate preparation went on as they painted their faces yellow and red and added the ceremonial headdress adorned with feathers from the birds of paradise. Around their waist they wore a band so they could stick a branch of a tree and this created the effect of a tail. In short they are made up to look like a bird of Paradise. They oil their bodies to make them shine. Nine men did the dance. It was done to the beat of the drum and was an energetic hop hop. It seemed quite strenuous and sweat was rolling down their faces before it was done. It was totally different from the dances we had seen before.

Next we went to Lirako, We saw the ladies working in their garden with a pig to help till the soil for them as it rooted in the ground for grubs. In the women's center we were shown the various crafts the women use to make their bilums and so forth. Three women were lined up in mourning clothes. The first was covered with mud and had a large bilum to disguise her. This was so that her husband's spirit wouldn't stick around and haunt her. This is the traditional wear. The second woman wore black and she will wear it until her clothes rot away. Only then is she free to marry again. This is the modern way to mourn. The third woman was dressed with bright colors painted on her face, carrying a red-tipped cassowary knife and umbrella and it was explained she was mourning someone who had been killed in her family and she would wear this conspicuous costume until the offending party made compensation for the death in the form of a pig or other goods.

We also saw how they line a bilum with leaves to act as a diaper. Moss is used to clean the baby up.

Our last stop was at Narima, the wig school. The wigmen pay 500 kina to go to this school for 18 months and live a monastic sort of life as they grow their hair into these amazing wigs. They pour the sacred water over their head and pick at the hair to make it fluff out. They sleep on a headrest at night so the hair keeps its shape. At the end of 18 months some of the men cut off and sell their wigs for 1000 to 1500 kina. Then they reenter the school to grow another. We were invited to try on some of the costumes but the women were not allowed to touch the wigs. Dowell tried one on and Martha and Alta each tried the bird of paradise hats.

Then it was time for a picnic lunch and return to the lodge. I lay down for a nap but it was not all that restful since Alta's I-pod is missing and she, then Martha, then Alice, one of the guides, then the manager all searched for it. We believe one of the maids took it.

And so we had our last meal together. We have really bonded with Jane and the Swaynes and it is sad we will probably not see them again.

Wednesday, September 16. We are up early to finish packing. It is very cold this morning. They weighed us as well as our bags to be sure of the weight going to Mount Hagen. At 9, the four of us boarded the bus for the airport. The plane has already left Hagen and we are supposed to be there before it. The roads were crowded with people for today is New Guinea's 34<sup>th</sup> independence day from Australia. We didn't quite make it before the plane but they let us into the field and soon we were packed into the six-seater. Bob Bates is our pilot. He is the expatriate Australian who owns Trans Niugini. The plane bore the call letters PN2BOB. Alta got to ride co-pilot! It was a beautiful day for the flight to Mount Hagen. The mountains were crystal clear.

Joseph met us and checked us into the Air Niugini flight to Port Moresby. Then he took us to the Quality Hotel Highlander<sup>51</sup> for lunch and our four-hour layover. Dowell went back up to Rondon

---

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.papuatrekking.com/huli\\_tribe.html](http://www.papuatrekking.com/huli_tribe.html)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-jKdkzsgF8>

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.qualityinn.com/hotel-mount\\_hagen-papua\\_new\\_guinea-PG003](http://www.qualityinn.com/hotel-mount_hagen-papua_new_guinea-PG003)

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ridge for he wants a story board<sup>52</sup> and never saw one he likes as well as the one he saw there. They have so many wonderful PNG art objects already!

We waited at the hotel watching the children swim and having lunch. Then it was back to the airport to wait for the flight to Port Moresby. By dinnertime we were back at the Airways Hotel having been met by Steven in full native dress. He does this once a year for Independence Day. His costume is a blend of different costumes. Does the fact that half his face is black mean he has killed just half a man? We enjoyed dinner at poolside and repacked for the trip home. There was such a restriction on the weight we could take that we had left a pile of things in Port Moresby. It was only at Ambua that they weighed us and our baggage but did not seem to mind that we were loaded down with woodcarvings and the like.

Thursday, September 17, 2009 and Friday September 18. The Howards went to go snorkeling. I invested my time at the spa. I had a lovely massage. The girl started with my feet and worked me all over from bottom to top. When I rolled over she put cold compresses on my eyes. I love the hard pressure she used and felt like a million dollars. Then I went to the business center. They couldn't get the WIFI to work in my room. It is always a problem to be away from email for many days and I was almost an hour deleting and scanning what was there.

The Howards got back about two and Steven took us to the airport. Air Niugini allowed Alta into the lounge but after that the night proved to be a disaster. It was five hours to Singapore and there we got a wheelchair pusher who didn't know where to take us. Finally got to the lounge for a couple of hours. The Singapore airport is something to see. It has a swimming pool, health club and all sorts of amenities so that you could almost live there. Even at midnight it was bustling with people..

Then it was three hours back to Manila in Philippine Air's seats that hardly reclined and we arrived in Manila exhausted at 4:00 am. We got to the Pan Pacific and were told our rooms would not be ready until 11:00! I said we would buy rooms but nothing was available except a \$300 suite. They said they would put an extra bed in it and up we went. Well the suite was beautiful. Two huge rooms: one a bedroom with king bed and the other a living room with two couches and dining area. We all went to bed and slept until 9:30 am when we had a wakeup call for we didn't want to miss the wonderful buffet breakfast. I came back to the room and slept some more. Everyone caught up with laundry, Internet or whatever. The point is we put ourselves through a lot of punishment to get here when what we should have done is spend the night in Singapore and come home from there as the Canadians we met at Ambua were doing. We still have a long day tomorrow to get home.

The good news is that they will let us keep the suite tonight instead of moving us to a standard room. Alta was so pleased she could straighten her hair at last! She and her father went to the mall to shop but Martha and I were busy with journals and so forth.

We ate dinner at the hotel's barbecue on the roof.

Saturday, September 19. We got up at 4 am to get to the airport in time for the flight to New York. They loaded us on and pulled back about 10 feet. Then they announced a problem with the hydraulic system. A stairway was brought and we offloaded and boarded a bus back to the terminal. We cooled our heels for four hours before they announced they were ready to go. They did let Alta into the business class lounge so at least we were all together. Then we boarded again but knew we had missed our connection in Detroit. The plane landed briefly in Nagoya, Japan so I could send an email to the limo company to tell them of my delay. At last we boarded the plane for the third time. Someone commented it was beginning to feel like Groundhogs Day<sup>53</sup>!

After viewing Sandra Bulloch in The Proposal<sup>54</sup>, a very funny movie, and Ghosts of Girlfriends Past<sup>55</sup> with Michael Douglas, I slept most of the way across the Pacific but woke with a head cold. In Detroit we found our alternative reservation and soon were on our way to Atlanta. I sat next to

---

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.art-pacific.com/artifacts/nugueina/storybdo.htm>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107048/>

<sup>54</sup> <http://movies.yahoo.com/movie/1810012112/info>

<sup>55</sup> <http://movies.msn.com/movies/movie/ghosts-of-girlfriends-past/>

## 2009 MANILA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

an attractive woman who works for Google and was on her way to Ireland on business. We both got online and enjoyed the Internet at 30,000 feet. I was happy to see the limo driver waiting for me.

It had been a very long day and I crawled in bed as soon as I was home.

Unfortunately the cold blossomed and for the next five days I fought nausea and stuffy head. Luckily the Travel clinic had prescribed Tamiflu for me before I left so I think I staved off the real flu.