

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Including Irian Jaya Province, PNG is the 2nd largest island in the world. It is 800km long, 680km wide and has Mt Wilhelm rising 4820 metres in the centre. 75% is covered by rainforest.

People arrived in PNG 50,000 years ago. Most highland villages were populated 10,000 ago. Agriculture followed 1000 later.

PNG has 800 languages and cultural groups.

Most tribes remain within tribal area living in grass huts. Intertribal warfare is common as a means of stealing the next tribe's land.

Mountains and mist cause isolation as it takes two days to walk to the next village.

The Bundi tribe lives in a mountainous area 110km north east of Goroka in Medang Province. They are surrounded by four tribal groups. As the only transport into Bundi is by air most store goods are bought in by foot by the neighbouring Chimbu tribe.

The valley between the Bundi and Goroka is the Asaro valley where the tribes were cannibals now they use mobiles.

ANIMALS

PNG has 190 mammals, which include spiny anteaters, echidnas and 70 species of bandicoot, rats, wallabies, tree kangaroos, sugar gliders, Painted ringtail possums and cuscus (all have pouches for new born – their skins are used for hats and bags).

There are 70 species of bats including flying foxes, blossom bats, 55 species of rodents, moss rat, tree mice, melomys and ground rats.

There are 25,000 species of beetle and 6000 moths and butterflies and 160 species of frog.

New Guinea has 2 species of crocodile, saltwater and fresh; 170 species of lizard, including the legless lizards, dragon, monitor, geckoes and goanna; 110 species of snake including tree snakes, pythons, death adders and taipans.

New Guinea has 708 listed bird species. Including cassowaries that are used as money or their thigh bones are made into daggers. There are 38 species of the Bird of Paradise that are protected but as their feathers are highly prized as dancing costume decorations, so men make huts in the tops of trees to capture them.

FOOD

Sweet potato and pig are the most popular foods.

The pandanus palm produces orange, red or yellow fruit called komba, edible kernels and oily seeds. Pandanus leaves are used for rain capes, floor mats and roof thatching

Coconuts are eaten. The fibre is used for fishnets and woven into materials.

Betel nut mixed with crushed coral limestone is chewed into a pulp that looks like blood. It is never swallowed, but always spat out.

TRADE

The Bundi tribe trades with the Chimbu Highland tribe and the Usino Lowland tribe. With the Usino they trade shell body ornaments, sweet potato, pigs, palm wood for bows and palm leaf mats. They receive dried fish, lime, coconuts, areca nuts, cassowary chicks, sago and taro, salt, tobacco, stone axes, wooden bowls and birds of paradise plums, and Victorian pigeon and hornbill feathers for decoration. They trade for wives and shop stores with the Chimbu.

CLOTHING

A Bundi school child wears a lap lap in front made of grass, wide leaves at the back called arse grass and knitted possum and feathered hats as well as beaded necklaces.

CULTIVATION

Clearing mountain slopes to make the garden is the boys' job.

Planting and tending of vegetable garden is the girl's job.

By noon gardens are engulfed in cloud.

Territorial land is protected by warriors.

Women keep pigs, cassowaries, banana, sugar cane, and search for wild mushrooms, fungi, sugar cane banana rooty, leaves ferns roots nuts and pandanus. Land is left fallow to recuperate after a crop.

BOY 'S TRADITIONS

Boys live alone in the forest for two years to learn to hunt bats, mice, tree rats, tree kangaroos, snakes, lizards, goannas, bandicoots, possums, wild pig, wallaby and frogs. They learn how to dry meat and animal skins and capture eels in the rivers and streams. Boys become warriors between fifteen and seventeen years.

Before guns were introduced the forests were full of parrots, cockatoos, doves, birds of paradise and cassowaries, their feathers all prized for use in elaborately decorated headdresses.

Boys learn to play Nakai flutes. Flutes are played in pairs. The second flute echoes the first. Their flutes imitate the sounds of birds.

ADULTS TRADITIONS

Men and boys live in men's house, which is the most important building of village. Females are barred from men's house. When a tribal ceremonial house is built (about every five years) females and males are segregated by a wall.

A man's leadership qualities are judged by how many pigs he owns. If his wife is a good pig raiser he may not remarry. If she isn't, he can marry as often as he likes. He may go to the Chimbu tribal area to court a new wife.

Should a Bundi man leave the tribe to become educated, he must give many presents of beer and canned goods to his entire tribe

Women weave large soft baskets that they use to carry heavy loads of vegetables, pigs and babies. These baskets hang down their backs from a head strap. Men don't carry anything but spears and sometimes mobile phones.

Children are never hit. If someone hits a child they must pay the family a pig. But anyone can scold a naughty child. Girls are treated more harshly than boys. Girls and boys are separated almost from birth.

MAGIC, SPIRITS, SORCERY

Sorcerers know which plants are poisonous and which cure illness, such as nettles are used to heal cuts and wounds. Sorcery is very important. The PNG people believe that every death, other than old age, is due to magic. They believe the forests are full of spirits and that their guardian spirits or ancestral spirits will punish them if they don't hold traditional customs, if taboos are broken or ceremonies not upheld.

Kangi poroi is a guardian spirit who protects males. He guards young men, during their kirivu kangi initiation period. He rewards those who uphold the ceremonies with healthy children and success at hunting.

The female guardian spirits helps women during courtship. Girls call upon them to make them pretty, although, when choosing a wife a warrior prefers a hard working girl to a pretty girl.

COSTUMES

Moss and real hair are made into wigs. Wig men take 2 years to grow their hair over a bamboo frame before it is cut off and sold as a wig.

Bark is cut from trees and beaten into tapa cloth. To decorate the cloth they use berries, roots and leaves to make dyes. Charcoal and clay used for decoration bodies. Shells and Christmas beetles are strung together as necklaces. A phosphorescent fungus found at the bottom of bamboo is used as face paint by dancers during sing sing and Kiundus drums are played.

Nose piercing by shells, bones, sardine tin keys or slithers of bamboo are popular.

Women wear decorative head strap baskets.

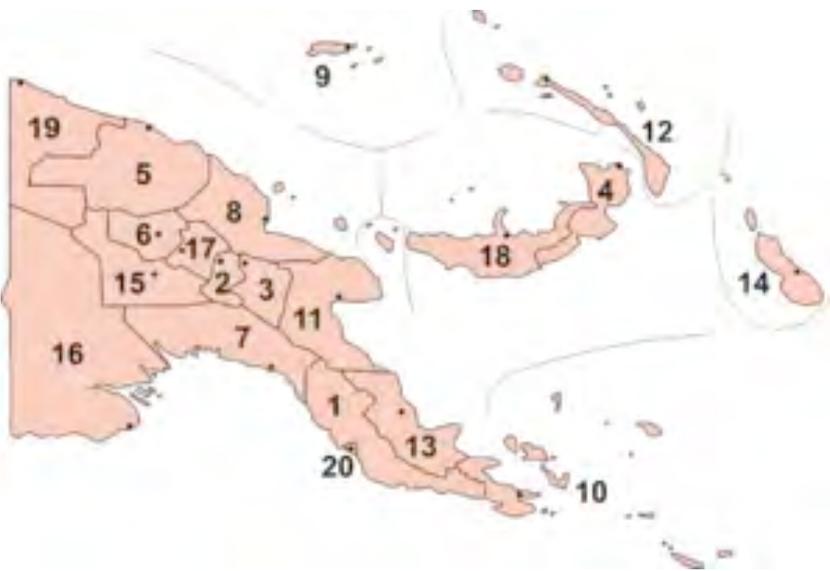
LANGUAGE

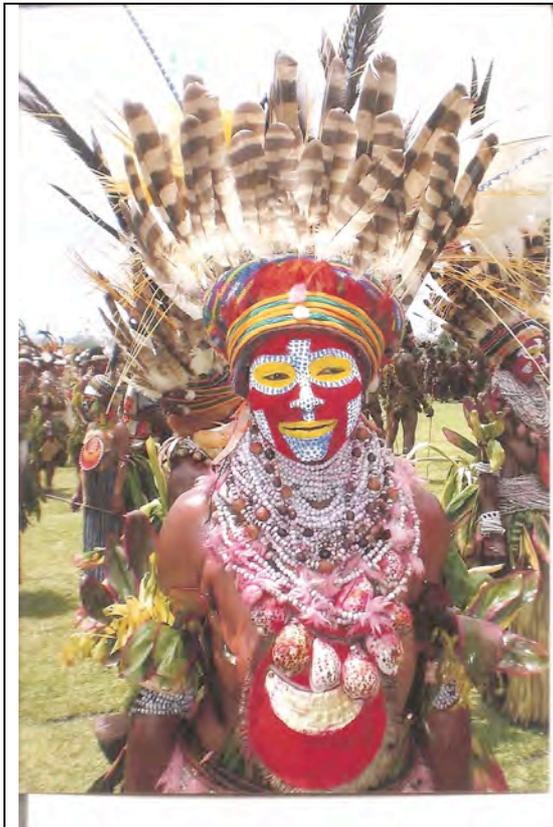
PNG is home to one-fifth of the world's languages. Less than 4 million people speak close to 800 distinct languages.

Tribes are divided into kin or clan groups. Pidgin is the universal language of PNG.

PROVINCES

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|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Central | 11. Morobe |
| 2. Chimbu (Simbu) | 12. New Ireland |
| 3. Eastern Highlands | 13. Northern (Oro Province) |
| 4. East New Britain | 14. Bougainville (North Solomons) |
| 5. East Sepik | 15. Southern Highlands |
| 6. Enga | 16. Western Province (Fly) |
| 7. Gulf | 17. Western Highlands |
| 8. Madang | 18. West New Britain |
| 9. Manus | 19. West Sepik (Sandaun) |
| 10. Milne Bay | 20. National Capital District |

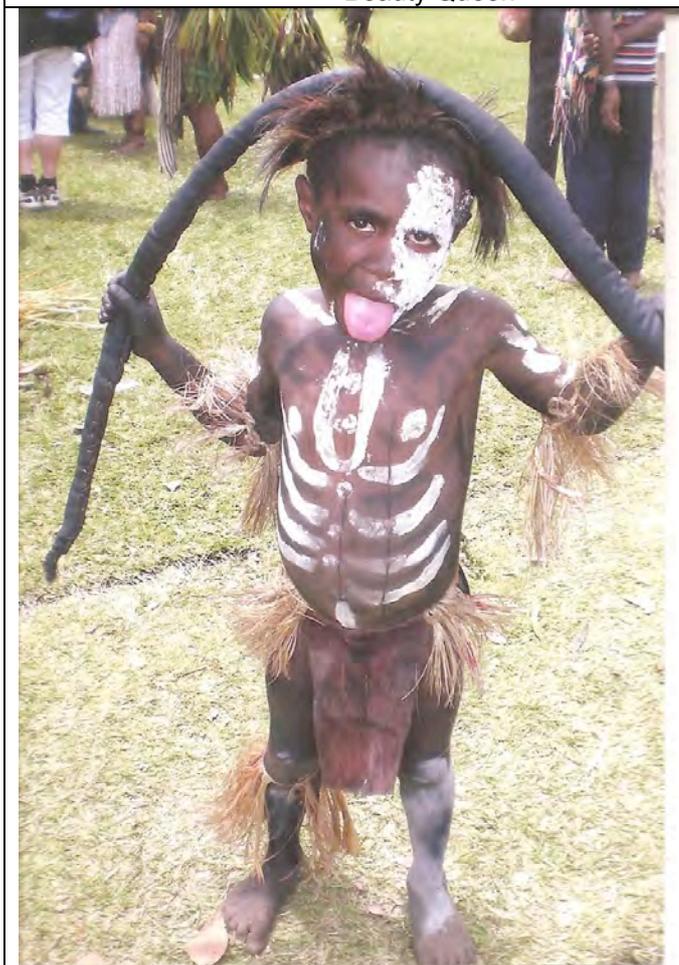




Beauty Queen



Mud men



Boy carrying tail of snake



Snake Dancers



Young Male Snake Dances

Photos by Patricia Bernard.