

Papua New Guinea

Is there another country anywhere with so much diversity? The six million inhabitants of this nation of mountains and islands are spread over 463,000km² of mountainous tropical forests, and speak over 800 different languages (12 per cent of the world total). Papua New Guinea (PNG) occupies half of the third largest island in the world and 160 other islands and 500 named cays.

Located just south of the equator and to the north of Australia, PNG is a diver's paradise with the fourth largest surface area of coral reef ecosystem in the world (40,000km² of reefs, seagrass beds, and mangroves in 250,000km² of seas) and underwater diversity with 2500 species of fish, corals, and molluscs. There are more dive sites than you can shake a stick at, with many more to be discovered, and barely a diver on them. The dive centres are so far apart that there is only ever one boat at any dive site. PNG is one of the few remaining places remaining off the tourist radar with less than 10,000 visitors each year.

It is one of the few places left in the world where a diver can see macro critters, pelagics, and big stuff, as well as fantastic soft and hard corals. The often misused and abused adjective 'pristine' is actually appropriate here, due to low fishing pressure in the area in comparison to other areas of the Coral Triangle, no dynamite fishing, and dive resorts that work with the locals to keep the reefs fisherman-free. Here we will look at the two best resorts for diving on the main island.

Discovering a diving mecca Loloata Island

Although located just a 20-minute drive and 10-minute boat ride from the international airport, Loloata Island Resort feels a thousand miles away, and makes Port Moresby the best capital city in the world for diving. Divers see a dazzling array of great fish, corals and invertebrates only minutes away from the dock aboard one of the two custom-built dive boats. It has a selection of dive sites, from shipwrecks and WW2 plane wrecks, muck diving around Lion Island, to the stunning chain of bommies along the barrier reef, including the mind-blowing Suzy's and End bommies. Loloata is also arguably the best resort in the world for finding *Rhinopias aphanes*, and many sites host Barbigant's pygmy seahorses.



Tufi

Over on the east coast of New Guinea, Tufi Dive Resort is a luxury resort with breathtaking sea and mountain views from the unique tropical fjords of the Cape Nelson peninsula in Oro province. The diving is spectacular, combining protected fjords, underwater seamounts, coral-covered reefs, hammerheads, mantas, wrecks and muck dives. Divers regularly see big schools of

barracuda, trevally, and sweetlips. The harbour is good for five different dives alone and is home to some world-class muck diving, and with 40 mapped reef sites and more uncharted reefs waiting to be explored, boredom is impossible here. For the dedicated WW2 plane wreck diver, there is the superb "Black Jack" B17 bomber in 46 metres of water, and a remarkable almost-intact P-38 Lightning three hour's boat ride away. If you want some time out of the water, you can discover local life with village visits and guesthouse stays, go on outrigger safaris, snorkel, bird watch, kayak, fish, or explore on foot with a guide.

Papua New Guinea is called the land of a million different journeys with, on top of stunning diving, cultural trips, Highland sing-sings, bird watching, and trekking. Using its expertise and local knowledge, Best of PNG

endeavours to create the perfect one for every client, matching the right resorts to individual and group desires. They organise all internal travel arrangements and Port Moresby stop-overs as well as flights from regional international airports. You pay the same prices as booking directly with the resorts, hotels, and operators, but to just one company.

To find out more...



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