

# Focus on Planet Earth Presents

## Papua New Guinea with Michele Westmorland

October 17 - 30, 2010

Welcome!! I am thrilled you have chosen to join me on the adventure of a lifetime. Papua New Guinea is one of the most fascinating and diverse island nations in the world. This newsletter is to help you begin the planning - and to let you know I am always available for any questions you may have.

First of all, hats off to David and the staff at Focus on Planet Earth! They have detailed many of the items for travel to PNG that you need to be concerned with thoroughly. But as a photographer, I have my own tricks up my sleeve.

### A Weighty Thing:

Some people say I come with a lot of baggage. Yes, but not the type that a friendly therapist can deal with. Australian airports are very strict about luggage so I really encourage you to carefully think through your wardrobe and equipment. I have, on occasion, got by with my camera equipment weighing more than what's allowed. However, I am always prepared for them to try to take the bag away. You know that photo vest that you dread wearing because of the tropical heat? Wear it. It is the perfect place to off load some lenses and other pieces and parts to reduce the overall weight of the camera bag. I use a Lowepro rolling computrek for 2 camera bodies, some lenses, laptop computer and accessories. It will be overweight and many times they just ignore it but if they don't, I stuff all I can in my photo vest. While traveling in PNG, I will make every attempt to help everyone get through with as few problems as possible, and without taking out the credit card, but I cannot guarantee that if there is an overweight issue, payment can be avoided. I do know some wonderful people who work for the airlines and they are usually most helpful.



### Clothing and Personal Items:

I love all the clothing designed today for the adventurous traveler. Zip-off pants and lightweight fabrics are a must, both for washing and drying quickly for reducing the weight. I will bring only enough to have one set laundered while I wear the other. I also forget about making a fashion statement and when it comes to make-up, it's only enough so I don't scare anyone. No hair dryer, curling irons - just a pony tail suffices for this trip.

### Camera Equipment:

Because I shoot digitally, it will be necessary for me to bring my laptop. That doesn't mean you have to if you have a small device to store images. And you will shoot a lot of images. It would be helpful to me if you could alert me to the kind of equipment you use now. That way I have time to make suggestions. We will be photographing everything from insects to landscapes, so check the toys you have now and see if you should add something to the collection. I will add a couple of items if space allows that we can share, such as a diffuser or reflector.



By the way, I'm sure you're dying to know - I shoot Canon. I carry the following major camera items:

Two (2) - bodies; 16-35mm zoom lens; 100 - 400mm f5.6 image stabilized lens; 24-70mm f2.8 lens; 2x teleconverter; 100mm macro; flash; four (4) 8gb & 16gb micro drives plus a small external hard drive to back up all my images; carbon tripod with ball head; circular polarizer and neutral density filter PLUS all the small items required for proper cleaning; rechargeable batteries and chargers. I may even bring the 500mm F4 lens for birds of paradise. If you use AA batteries that are not rechargeable, consider the lithium AAs. They are somewhat expensive but last much longer.

### Land of Adventure:

This is one of the most amazing places on the planet. The diversity is unparalleled and all of your senses will be stimulated beyond belief. As we travel to each location, we will see things only a small number of people will ever experience. Tufi is a coastal paradise. The turquoise water, the verdant forests and the warm inhabitants will make our stay here memorable. The fjords (actually rias) of Cape Nelson are stunning so expect lots of beautiful landscape photos. The locals, properly called nationals, are warm and beautiful. The facial tattooing on the women is remarkable. Let me know if you want your very own traditional tattoo - it can be arranged! Of course, it's done with local sago thorns so I don't expect too many will be on the sign-up sheet.

Kumul will delight us with some of the most unusual insects and magical forests. Our village visit will make you fully understand the big differences between coastal and mountain tribes. And let's hope nature allows us the privilege of photographing one of the majestic species of birds of paradise. It is a simple lodge - think mountain cabin. The food is healthy but basic - plenty of chicken.

The Lae area in Morobe Province will provide an opportunity to capture photos of species we may have missed at the other locations. The botanical gardens and aviary are quite notable. However, the big event will be the cultural show or sing-sing as it is called in pidgin. So let's move to language.

Tok Pisin of pidgin, is the national language of Papua New Guinea. Many nationals speak English but many do not and some only speak their clan language – tok ples. Remember, PNG has over 850 different languages. It is a land of diversity! Pidgin is simple to understand when you see in print, but I still cannot understand it when spoken by the people. I am “language challenged” even after traveling there some 24 times. It's a fun language and the people always appreciate a good stab at communicating in their language. Here are a few simple phrases that will show them your respect.

Just so you know when someone refers to you as a dim-dim, it just means white person. I have been called a long-long dim-dim, crazy white person.

Hello:	Gude
Good Morning:	Moning
Good afternoon:	Apinun
How are you?	Yu stap gut?
I'm well.	Me stap gut
Thank you	Tenkyu
Thank you very much	Tenkyu tru
Goodbye	Lukim yu
What is your name?	Wana nem bilong yu?
My name is---	Nem bilong mi



And the most important one –

May I take a photo of you? Inap me kisim poto bilong yu?

Most nationals are very tolerant of our customs and give us a lot of leeway. However, it is important that women dress conservatively. The thighs must be covered. Sleeveless shirts are acceptable. Not many rules for men. That figures!

### HEALTH ISSUES:

This is extremely important. Do contact your doctor for a prescription for malaria meds. I personally do not recommend Lariam but listen to your physician. Bring your own kit of personal medical items such as: Cipro for stomach bugs, ibuprofen, plenty of bandaids, neosporin, and if allergic to stings, a kit for that. It is recommended to have evacuation insurance on any remote destination. Check with your carrier.