

# Kokoda Trek Report - 10 July 13 - Andrew Flanagan

24/07/2013

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Courage, endurance, mateship, sacrifice.....four qualities displayed on numerous occasions by our intrepid band of 7 trekkers plus the all-important porter team on the July 11 to 21 2013 trek. Our trekkers all came from the farming community of Kimber, South Australia.



As per usual, the trek started with the bone-shaking, skull rattling Chiropractic Express from Popondetta to Kokoda. Arriving well and truly tenderised, our trekkers enthusiastically explored Kokoda, taking in the plateau and absorbing the PNG humidity. Not entirely sure what the porters thought when they heard the trekkers 'names'- Ned, Bart, Tex, Sec, Moose, Junior Moose and Jughead! After a quick lunch it was 'packs on' and we were off to Deniki. The climb to Deniki is an early indication that the track takes no prisoners.....all of us were well and truly puffing and panting as we staggered into the beautiful campsite at Deniki.

The group soon found their trekking legs, keeping together and making good time, resulting in plenty of afternoon rest, card games and conversation. Day 2 saw us at Isurava, where we reflected on the deeds of the 39th and AIF units in 1942 as they bravely fought the Japanese on this sacred ground. Other highlights include the nightly talks from our Local Guide Nelson, a moving service at Brigade Hill and of course the wonderful welcome at our home village of Kagi, where many of the trekkers enjoyed an hour playing football with the Kagi kids. With plenty of mud along the track, each day was a mental and physical challenge.

Confusion reigned at Kagi when our non-rooster alarm clock Bart misread his watch and had the boys up at 4.30am instead of 5am, including our cook who promptly leapt out of bed and prepared breakfast by 5am. Since it wasn't light until 6.15am most ate breakfast, scratched our heads, and returned to bed!



We were all very surprised to see a number of young Japanese trekkers making their way along the track. Apparently they were apologising for Japanese treatment of local villagers during the war. A porter slingshot tournament at Templeton's was another highlight, with some amazing skills on display, resulting in a battered soft-drink can and a mangled piece of fruit.

There was hardly a dry eye under the gates at Owers', trekkers and guide alike reflecting on what was an incredible personal and collective experience. We had developed a true appreciation of the courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice of our soldiers. The track had demanded everything of us, and more, and we would all return home changed men, privileged to have walked in the footsteps of the brave, and determined to ensure that we would spread the word of their amazing deeds. Ordinary men, who did extraordinary things!

As usual the visit to Bomana was an opportunity to pay our respects to the fallen, with the Kimber Boys locating many of the graves of the diggers that we had learnt about over the course of the trek, Australian heroes like Metson, McCallum, Kingsbury and Fletcher. The traditional porter dinner was an opportunity to say a final thanks to our amazing No Roads porter team, who farewelled the trekkers with a wonderful song.

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