

Kokoda Trek Report - 27 Nov 2013 - Drew Gordon

23/12/2013

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Fountain Gate Secondary College accepts the challenge of a wet season Kokoda Trek!!

Leading school groups on Kokoda is always a very rewarding experience and so it was again with my group from Patterson River Secondary College. It was the sixth time that the school has trekked with No Roads. This trek included a fabulous two day village stay in Kagi mid trek.



This was the final No Roads trek for the season and in fact we would have the track to ourselves as the wet season was on the way.

The trip commenced with a tour of lovely downtown Port Moresby, including a walking tour of Hanuabada village, which is built on stilts into the harbour, the modern history museum and the beach front.

After enjoying the buffet at the hotel the trip to Popondetta the next morning was without drama and all packs/supplies arrived, always a good start to a trek.

One disturbing thing occurred at the Popondetta supermarket. As we entered we were greeted by a 2m gyrating Father Xmas bellowing, "Ho Ho Ho, Merry Xmas" The word bizarre came to mind.



The bone shaking journey from Popondetta to Kokoda on a PMV has accurately gained the name within the No Roads guides team as the dreaded "Chiropractic Express". The PMV now has a sign to formalise the name.



At one point in this journey it appeared that we may not have been able to reach Kokoda due to a swollen river with no bridge just prior to the Kumusi....but help was just a few kina away!! A front end loader arrived from doing work on a bridge and towed our PNV across the river. Once again everything was going in our favour. Some treks are just like that!!

The first four days trekking were challenging as usual as the group of 7 students and two teachers developed their "trek fitness". A highlight was the commemorative service at Isurava Memorial and crossing the sensational vine bridge over Eora Creek.....or the mighty Eora River as it would be more accurately named at the time of our crossing!!

The two days in Kagi was a huge success. The female students worked in the gardens weeding with the boys cutting tress and building a pig fence. There was also assisting with the preparation of a moo moo feast and many games with the village kids.

The highlight was the "greasy pole" or in pigin, "grissy pole" challenge. This consisted of a hardwood tree of approximately 10min high with the bark stripped. A hole was then dug in the sports ground and the "grissy pole" then erected to its full height!!! Suspended from a cross bar at the top were NRE caps, t shirts and other prizes. The fun and games then began with villagers and porters building human pyramids in an attempt to get someone to the top to grab a prize.

Originally I had thought that the pole would be considerably shorter....not 10m! For this reason the students did not partake in the mayhem and fun that ensues as human pyramids collapses and the men and boys of Kagi crashed to the muddy ground. Festivities then ended when the pole, which was overloaded with climbers crashed to the ground. How nobody was injured was a miracle.

Another highlight of the Kagi visit was the Kagi Elementary School end of year awards ceremony. This was held in the centre of the village in the open and the entire village was present. The students were called out and presented with a certificate by the school's chairman and also each given books and pencils by the visiting school group. A moo moo feast followed.

It was a fantastic stay in Kagi and the students obtained a real insight life in a PNG village.

The group left Kagi with heavy hearts but wonderful memories of the many friends that they had made.

The final four day trek to Owers' Corner was wet and muddy as the rainy season set in. The group by this stage were tired but working as a great team and after wading across the Goldie River, with a much need swim pushed on for the final assault on the dreaded hill below Owers.

It was a triumphant and happy group of students and teachers that as a group walked through the Kokoda arches, having accepted the challenge of Kokoda and overcome everything that the track could throw at them. Congratulations to Patterson River Secondary College 2013 trekking team, you are legends!!!

We look forward to schools return next trekking season to again accept the challenge of Kokoda.

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24/12/2013 05:44

thanks for sharing this great post. it's very interesting! keep up the great work!

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24/12/2013 09:38

Hey Drew, sounds like a great trek, love the santa at Popondetta! Congrats to all the trekkers, it is an amazing journey! Looking forward to Sept 2014!

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