

Kokoda Trek Report - 9 July 13 - Daniel Hogarth

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The Kokoda Track is an amazing experience for anybody to undertake at a point in his or her life. So when a school has the vision to see this unique opportunity for a group Year 11 students in our community you know they truly have their best interests at heart. This is just what Benalla P-12 College (in North-East Victoria) did for 7 students. The value in walking the Kokoda track is clearly visible as this is the 5th year that the school has undertaken the trek.



Jill, Brookelyn, Riley, Dan, Shawn, Austin, Kane along with two staff Richard and Melinda spent many hours training for the extra-curricular activity that the school offers. The diverse range of students was so close and continued to bond as the trek unfolded.

The trek offers so much to students. It develops an understanding of World War II history and immerses students understanding of Australian history. It introduces students to a irreplaceable natural environment, world geography, and a developing country. Gives students a chance to develop international relationships and ties. It begins to develop resilience and leadership qualities in the leaders of tomorrow. Importantly walking the Kokoda Track also provides an environment for students to explore their potential and push their limits, giving themselves an awareness of what they are capable of independent of their family and friends

Seeing the excitement on the faces of the trekkers as they walked through starting gates at Kokoda was electric. This kept the group buzzing on the way the Deniki and beyond.

The understanding and over pouring of emotion at Isurava was definitely by a group of students that comprehended the battle in 1942 and displayed maturity well beyond their years.

The joy bursting from students enjoying the track as we crossed the vine bridge at Eora Creek was clear, but none more so when teacher Richard crossed and excitedly said "I feel like I am in an Indiana Jones movie on this bridge".

Kagi is a special place for all along the track. This trek saw an early arrival into the village that is the heart of the No Roads team. This made time for the trekkers to relax, have a bash of cricket with the locals in the celebrated Melbourne Stars shirt, explore village life, soak up the culture, sing, dance, and take in the remarkable village.

The Brigade Hill service once again brought the raw passion and emotion out in students and staff alike. All were amazed at the courage our soldiers had shown years ago.



The final few days of the trek saw the group really bond and develop a great understanding of each other. Jokes, laughter and an enthusiasm was magnified even further, an astuteness to help one another in situations that push individuals to their limits is something that only the classroom of the Kokoda track will ever teach.

Highlights of the trek include:

- The look of wonder and amazement on the trekkers faces as they became immersed in the jungle around them on the way from Popengetta to Kokoda.
- Seeing the newly discovered Australian ammunition dump near Templetons. Most of the porters still had not seen it. Thanks for the heads up AJ!
- The vine Bridge at Eora Creek. Never ceases to amaze the trekkers and send images of Indiana Jones running through their minds...hey Richard!
- Being the 150th group to walk the track this year from either direction. Got to love a good stat.
- The hand eye co-ordination from some of the porters is amazing. Magnified when we played cricket with a handful of them at Kagi, We were unable get a couple out. Get them in the Australian team for the Ashes!
- The enjoyment had by all at Kagi with the cultural singing and dancing.
- The reaction when the trekkers got right into singing a rock song with real enthusiasm for the locals, the reaction with applause, whistles and screams was like being rock stars at a concert.
- Discovery of a 20m waterfall just before Menari. The waterfall is just up the feeder creek that comes into Vabuiagi River (big river crossing just before Menari) The feeder creek opposite the rock where the plaque to Damien Parer is placed. Even our Local Guide Simon was amazed at the discovery, having never seen it before.
- The final highlight of the trek was a moment that happened off the track. The last day of the track co-incidentally lined up with Rugby State of Origin (game 3). So from the morning, right through to kick off time at night, the banter between the No Roads team and the trekkers came thick and fast. Watching the game at the Holiday Inn the porters came out of their shy persona and into a realm of excitement and adrenaline as we lived on edge during the State of Origin highs and lows. Scenes of jubilation and commiseration erupted upon the final siren. A possible major trip date for the future?

"The Kokoda Track is more than just a walk, it's an adventure, a challenge, it's part of Australia's history, an immersion in culture, and a place to push your limits to explore your potential"

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