

Kokoda Trek Report - May 13 - Andrew Johnson

02/06/2013

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Ah the joys of PNG!! This trip started off ominously with a cancelled flight and a forced lay over at Cairns. It least it gave me time to get to know Wendy, Mary & Julie, but also time to panic as our replacement flight gets in at 8am and the girls need to catch a flight to Lae departing at 9am! Well thanks to priority customs clearance and Jack Deiea standing in the middle of the runway blocking all flights, (actually, it was just held for 10 minutes while they raced to the plane), the girls made it to Lae to visit the cemetery where a relative has lain unvisited since the war – nice!

All the group caught up that afternoon as the two flights ex Lae & Brisbane landed at the same time.

Popondetta. Nearly had to turn around as the river was flooded and only the most intrepid 4wd drivers getting through. Certainly not our PMV! Quick contribution to the locals and we walked across a very exciting log bridge and joined the Chiropractic Express to Kokoda.

This in turn posed some problems as the wet weather had brought a massive tree down across the road. Not prepared to bargain this time, Clement and the men got stuck into it with an axe and we had most of it cleared before a huge Front End loader did the rest.

After a very long day, we got into Deniki just after dark and set up in the guest house awaiting the dawn which never fails to turn on a great show over the Yodda Valley.

First award of the 'Pink Hat' (thanks John Deere Belmont for the donations!) for pathetic effort went to Neino for only carrying a day pack first day. Over the following days, Tobias, Motex, Phillip, Myself and a couple of others wore this badge of dishonour culminating with Clement who got it by always hiding up the back where no one sees him go over. Magically, Clement went down within 20 metres of putting it on! The hat finally went to the biggest wimp of all, who hasn't walked the track in years, in fact has forgotten where it goes and now flies home to Kagi – yep big Jack Deiea again!



Usual sights and wonders once more. Still can't get over that rope bridge over Eora Creek – story goes that a team came down from the highlands to teach them how to do it!

Highlights:

- Helicopter waving with branches of leaves does nothing to placate angry bees as a couple took a swipe at Julie, one connecting with her eyelid! Ouch and a long scary wait as we watched it blossom. Fortunately after 24 hours it was on the way down again. Some good pirate jokes in the meantime though
- Searching for spent shells at Myola, the men turned over a sod to reveal about 20 of them – who needs a metal detector!
- Kagi – what fun yet again. Classic photo bomb with Kagi's Fuzzy Wuzzy which we loved
- Nauro where Linasa made the most amazing sort of Lamington Cake thing, honestly he IS PNG's Master Chef
- Weather held out beautifully with not too much rain or hot sun, just a great week in the tropics.
- Raw emotion. Isurava, Brigade Hill, Owers Corner & Bomana never fail to move people
- Finding the grave site of a friend of Julies uncle who served in the 39th right next to Lt Col Owen and just a couple down from Bruce Kingsbury. Another grave never visited but now photographed for family. There's an incentive to book a trek with NoRoads!

And all the other fun, challenging, relaxing, and exciting things that go together to make for another incredible Kokoda Trek. Nothing like taking a group of good country peoples (Shepparton rules!!) into an environment like this to really see the good side of life. Thanks Crew.

Cheers

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Wendy Sewell

07/06/2013 19:03

Andrew was excellant Kokoda guide, full of war information, wonderful with the local guides & porters they all worked together as a team,

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