

KOKODA SPIRIT

Captain Sam Templeton Memorial Trek

In the footsteps of the 39th Battalion

Kokoda Trail Exclusive Trek Itinerary 7-9NT from \$3,195.00
7 nights Owers' Corner to Kokoda
2 nights Kokoda-Oivi-Awala (Buna Option)

Day 1 Port Moresby – Good Water Camp/Dump 66 (approx. 3 hours)

Today we travel by road from Port Moresby via the Bomana War Cemetery to pay our respect to the fallen soldiers. We then travel to Sogeri where there is a white stone monument marking the beginning of the Kokoda Trail. Our road journey then takes us to McDonald's Corner, this is where "B" company of the 39th Battalion commenced their walk to Kokoda and then onto the North Coast area. "B" company was led by Captain Sam Templeton and guided by Bert Kienzle. They departed McDonald's Corner on July 7 1942 and arrived in Kokoda July 15 1942. We continue to Owers' Corner with an air of excitement and apprehension for the journey ahead. There is time to relax along the road and take photographs of the spectacular scenery.

On our arrival at Owers' Corner we make final checks and preparations for the trek ahead and meet our personal porters. Owers' Corner was also the place where our Australian troops first received the morale boosting artillery support from the gunners. Three 25pound guns were positioned on the ground and fired 800 rounds over three days into Ioribaiwa Ridge, where the Japanese made their last big push; it took 25 seconds for the projectiles to cover the 15miles across Imita Ridge into Ioribaiwa.

Our troops also dragged down the hill one of the 25pound guns across Goldie River and up towards Imita Ridge. Have a look for the original zig zag track cut along the way which wound its way down the ridge and up towards Imita Ridge. We start the Kokoda Track with a steep descent down to the Goldie River. The trail crosses the Goldie River and past the abandoned village of Uberi. **(Uberi was the 39th Battalions first camp)** Our first camp is deep jungle, in an old wartime campsite location of Dump 66 at the foot of Imita Ridge. Dump 66 was a major supply/logistic area and also had a medical aid post.

Overnight Dump 66

Day 2 Good Water Camp/Dump 66 – Ioribaiwa (approx. 7 hours)

The first full day of the Kokoda Trail walk includes the ascent up Imita Ridge. Although this is not the steepest or the highest of the mountains along the trail, it will give you an indication of things to come. We stop on top of Imita Ridge and soak in the atmosphere of the place. Imita Ridge was our last line of defence, the line was drawn in the sand here, there was to be no further withdrawal. There was a set of 'Golden Stairs' on both sides of Imita Ridge and up towards Ioribaiwa Village. It is important to remember across the Kokoda Track that there was more than one set of Golden Stairs. We descend down Imita Ridge into the beautiful Ua-Ule Creek area (Pronounced Fa-Lay). Here we take our boots off and put on our adventure sandals to cross the creek 22 times. After the creek crossings we put our boots back on and make our final ascent for the day up the gruelling Ioribaiwa Ridge. You will now know that all that training was now worthwhile. Our walk today finishes at the Village of Ioribaiwa. **(Ioribaiwa was the 39th Battalions second night camp)**

Overnight Ioribaiwa

Day 3 Ioribaiwa – Hamurduri (approx. 9 hours)

We have an early start today as we leave Ioribaiwa Village and make our climb up to the top of Ioribaiwa Ridge. This is the furthest spot that the Japanese made across the Kokoda Track, before being ordered to advance to the rear back to Buna. From this point on the ridge the Japanese could see the lights of Port Moresby. Ioribaiwa Ridge was also the spot where our artillery was pounding the Japanese and the scene of bloody fighting. There is also a series of both Australian and Japanese trenches in this area. Our journey takes us down towards Ofi Creek which was the scene of a very successful Australian ambush on the Japanese. Our journey across the Kokoda Trail see us climb one of the most difficult and tiresome sections of the track up and over the Maguli Range to the village of Naoro this is a long climb

up that appears to never end. Naoro is another village we see in our travels and is a very pretty place. On the way up there is a concealed Japanese trench system at the Japanese camp where the Japanese mountain gun was being used to pound the Australians on Ioribaiwa Ridge. We camp near the Brown River at Hamurduri. **(This camp site is near the old village of Naoro. Naoro was the 39th Battalions third night camp)**

Overnight Hamurduri

Day 4 Hamurduri – Brigade Hill-Efogi (approx. 8 hours)

The Naoro area was also the scene for some aerial supply drops, better known as biscuit bombing. From our camp site, we cross the Brown River, after about an hour's walk through marshy ground. It's mostly level to the river with the more difficult sections crossing with log bridges and causeways. There is a steep climb shortly after the Brown River known as the wall; this climb will certainly test your fitness. This climb brings you to a crest with views down to Menari Village – our overnight stop. A steep descent and a walk through the tidy village will bring you to our overnight village accommodation. A Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel who is a village elder runs it. Menari is also the site of one of the most famous speeches made regarding the Kokoda Track campaign by LT COL Ralph Honner. It was his inspirational thank you address to the heroic men of the 39th battalion, those "ragged bloody heroes". From Menari the next major climb is up Brigade Hill, this will take us 4 hours. Along the track occasional weapon pits mark "stay behind" positions of both Japanese and Australian Forces as they withdrew. Brigade Hill was also nicknamed "Butchers Hill" by the Australian soldiers due to the number killed, on both sides, during the Australian withdrawal. 101 Australian Soldiers lost their lives between the 6-8 September 1942 during the battles of Brigade Hill and Mission Ridge. We stop and reflect on the knoll about the battles and lives lost during this bloody and ferocious fight.

We now descend down from Brigade Hill and stop at Nishimura's stump. Nishimura is the Japanese soldier who pledges to recover the remains of his deceased comrades. He is known as the "**Bone Man of Kokoda**".

Our journey takes us past the turnoff to Mission Ridge. From here there are even more spectacular panoramic views on the northerly slopes of the mountain of the villages of Kagi and Efogi spread out below. Efogi Village is the major settlement on the Kokoda Trail, with an airstrip and a first aid post. Efogi is the halfway mark and the altitude climbed becomes apparent in the rapid cooling of the evening after night falls. **(Efogi was the 39th Battalions fourth night camp.)**

Overnight Efogi

Day 5 Efogi – Kagi- 1900 camp (approx. 8 hours)

We continue our walk out of Efogi and up to Efogi Number 2, down to the main creek and up to Kagi Village. **(Kagi was the 39th Battalions fifth night camp site. We continue four hours further on to 1900 camp site.)** We spend lunch in Kagi before we climb up and over the shoulder of Mt Bellamy towards our evening camp. There are spectacular views back to Kagi and Efogi. This is the region that the Japanese conducted their infamous lantern parade. Brigadier Potts also ordered an aerial attack along the Kagi Ridge prior to the battle of Brigade Hill and Mission Ridge. You can feel the spirit of the Australian Soldiers as they withdraw down the ridgeline back towards Efogi. We walk past large village gardens with high fences to keep wild pigs out of the crops. Without the vegetables grown in these gardens, villagers would starve, so the prodigious effort in felling, trimming and dragging logs form a 1.5 metre high fence line is a matter of survival. Along part of the razor ridge leading up to Mt Bellamy is open Kunai grass without any tree cover. This cleared areas of the gardens means an exposure for some two hours to the tropical sun. It is not the place to loiter as water consumption increases and the full packs slow movement down.

"Stay behind" pits are scattered along the track, the larger (3 man size) indicate position of a machine gun. Engagement ranges vary from 3-4 metres out to 5 metres. Very close combat indeed!

Mt Bellamy is higher than Mt Kosciuszko and the effects of such heights start to wear on the trekkers. Our trek towards camp takes us through an ancient Arctic beech forest with magnificent giant pandanus and beech trees. The camp this night is in the jungle some two hours climb below the crest, it is also the place that we discovered the skeletal remains of 4 Japanese Soldiers from the 41st Regiment killed by air craft strafing in an Australian ambush. This is an eerie place, as you progress along the track, which is now corridorred with trees and vines with moss. The moss hangs in streamers from dead and living trees with little light to pierce the gloom. Until the war, this was a taboo placed and avoided by all.

Overnight 1900 Camp Site

Day 6 1900 camp site to Eora Creek. (approx. 9 hours)

We then start upward to the highest point of the track on Mt Bellamy at 2190m.

We stop at a vantage point called "Kokoda Gap" with magnificent views (on clear days) of the surrounding mountains, the lower part of the Owen Stanley Range and the Yodda valley in the distance. The "Kokoda Gap" is the area that Generals Blamey and Macarthur wanted to dynamite to prevent the Japanese from coming through! This was to be our Thermopylae our 300 Spartans to hold back the ravages of the Japanese Army! Nice plan except the Kokoda Gap is over 12 km wide and all the Spartans were killed! As you could imagine our boys were not real fond of the plan! Planes can be heard droning overhead several times during the day as they make their way through the gap on their way to Kokoda or returning back to Port Moresby. What takes nine days for those walking the Kokoda Trail, an aircraft does in 35 minutes!

The descent from the Kokoda Gap lookout is steep initially, but eases *some* 3 hours down the Trail to a steady decline toward Iora Creek at Templeton's Crossing 1. The area is dotted with weapon pits. Major delaying actions were fought here Japanese positions on the North side and Australian positions to the South side of the Creek.

As we have found, most of those who travel the Kokoda Trail have very little accurate knowledge of the true position of battle sites or even a good knowledge of what happened during the campaign. They plod past areas unaware of relics and earthworks hidden 3 or 4 metres off to their sides. They miss a great deal.

Bridging the creek is by a temporary span masterly constructed by the boys made of logs bundled together. We cross carefully, with dry feet – for a change. The dry foot does not last long as we come upon Templeton's Crossing Number 2. The muddy track parallels (generally) Iora Creek and is intersected with innumerable small creeks flowing across the track, often in only a short distance, until cascading down into the main creek, Iora. The main creek joins these tributaries and, when Templeton's Crossing Number 2 is reached, it is a foaming torrent. The noise is constant, amplified by the deep, sharp-sided valley. The deep valley means that the sun sets early in the day. A series of areas were levelled here during the campaign for the construction of store huts, medical post, kitchen (Haus Kook) and other native built buildings, the buildings are long gone, but the level sites stand out from the roughness of the terrain.

Digging explorations on a number of trips has turned up a wide variety of relics from expended and live ammunition of all calibres, (Australian and Japanese) 36 pattern hand grenades to personal equipment such as an Australian Army kit preserved in the soil covering it – webbing buckles, water bottles; also telephone equipment and numerous other items. **(Templeton's Crossing was the 39th Battalions sixth night camp.)**

We continue our journey along the track along Iora Creek the track takes us over small ups and downs as we cross Iora Creek. After about one and a half hours the track begins to steadily climb to the crest where more and more weapon pits become visible. As the track descends here it becomes apparent you are clearly passing through a major defensive area.

The track drops suddenly, almost vertically, to the abandoned Iora Creek Village. This too, was a major staging centre. Overhead is a massive hill which overlooks the whole area, the Japanese defence system here, halted the returning Australians in their tracks for two weeks, before they overcame the tenacious defence of the Japanese. Often late afternoon mist creeps up the valley enclosing the already dark canopy the place has a special atmosphere all of its own.

Overnight Eora Creek

Day 7 Eora Creek-Deniki (approx. 9 hours)

Our trek today takes us across Iora Creek and up to the Japanese defensive position. This was the place the Japanese defended vigorously for two weeks and kept the Australians pinned down with accurate machine gun and mountain gun fire. Further on lays Alola Village, some three and a half hours ahead. The track rises mostly along the contour line of the ranges until a sudden drop to the river below. With the usual bush bridging (we make our own if the earlier efforts have been washed away) it's across the river then up into Alola Village.

The rest house at Alola is to a degree dilapidated and you wonder how it stands but the view is fantastic. Similarly, the wash point nearby has spectacular views, toward Kokoda. The locals are friendly folk and often we can buy supplements like vegetables and fruit. We are literally up in the clouds here and often Alola is covered with a fog like veil. However, it clears in a few hours and the panoramic view is spectacular. Alola was a strategic area for the Australians with Brigadier Potts having his Headquarters'

here during the battle of Isurava. After a rest at Aloa we trek towards Isurava Battlefields. This is the location of what has been described as one of most significant battles of the South West Pacific War, the "Battle that saved Australia". A greatly outnumbered force of Australians, held a vastly greater number of Japanese for some 4 days between the 26th and 29th August 1942, their important timetable unravelled, initiating the beginning of the final destruction of the Japanese units. This is also the area that Private Bruce Steele Kingsbury won his Victorian Cross.

The original site of Isurava Village is still cleared with a magnificent memorial constructed commemorating the battle. The villagers moved out of this area after suspecting sorcery over some events. The new Isurava Village is about one hour from the old site and is in a well set out location with small hedges and gardens amongst the huts. A long day as the track unwinds into a long one, but it is nearly all downhill. We are very excited as we sense that the finish line is very close, caution is needed as we need to stay focused on the job of walking safely. The track continues down, crossing numerous streams and open spaces where shrubs and trees are blanketed by leafy Choko vines finally arriving at the village of Deniki. **(Deniki was the 39th Battalions seventh night camp.)**

Overnight Deniki

Day 8 Deniki – Kokoda (approx 3 hours)

In the morning we depart Deniki which was the scene of a short sharp battle during the Australians fighting withdrawal across the Kokoda Track. Deniki offers spectacular views down to Kokoda. Occasionally the open space coincides with the sides of the valleys and expansive views are exposed of the lower countryside and coast. A short walk further on and you step out onto a bare ridgeline with the village on the side. The jungle recedes with dramatic suddenness and children from the village of Hoi shout greetings, running to gather around the walkers. We stop at Hoi to savour the moment have a swim in the river and contemplate our journey.

From Hoi, it's a fast walk on undulating terrain, along a wide well kept track to the village of Kokoda. An hour from Kokoda the track becomes a rough road, 20 minutes and power lines appear. Village folk using the same road become more frequent responding to greetings with wide smiles – they know you have come over the Kokoda Trail and respect you for it.

Finally Kokoda!

Sometimes it almost seems anti climatic in those first few minutes of arrival. Somehow you expect a mayoral reception or a band welcome... then, slowly it sinks in. You HAVE walked the Kokoda Track and the sense of personal achievement grows, along with appreciation of the endeavours and sufferings of those before have truly walked in the footsteps of heroes. After exploring Kokoda our flight departs for Port Moresby. We arrive in Port Moresby around lunchtime and our transport returns us to the Hotel for welcome showers.

OPTION: Trekkers can depart trek from Kokoda and return to Port Moresby or continue on the trek to Oivi-Gorari-Awala and Buna. This option is the continuation of Captain Templeton's walk with the 39th Battalion.

Day 8 (Option extra \$795.00 per person) Kokoda-Oivi

We continue our journey on from Kokoda by truck and follow the track walked by Templeton and the 39th Battalion down to Oivi. The village of Oivi was the first battle that we had with the Japanese. Oivi is also the site where Captain Templeton was taken prisoner on the 26th July 1942 by the Japanese and killed. He was buried next to the first Oivi waterfall by **Kokichi Nishimura "The Bone Man of Kokoda"** in early August. We spend time searching for relics around the battlefield in the old village of Oivi and visit the Japanese camps scattered along the track. We walk down past the magnificent waterfall to the burial site of Captain Templeton and pay our respects.

Overnight Oivi

Day 9 Oivi-Gorari-Awala-Buna

After breakfast we continue our trip and visit the battle sites of Gorari and Awala. The area of Oivi and Gorari was the scene of a major battle against the Japanese on our advance back across the track. The village of Awala was the scene of our first battle with the Japanese on July 23 1942.

We then continue on to Buna, on our way to Buna we will stop at the Girua/Doburdura airstrip which was the home of the US bombers, we will also stop in and view the airstrip used by the fighter planes. Both these strips can be seen, with some imagination, as they were back in the war years. You will also see the massive horseshoe earth embankments used to park the planes in for protection.

We trek through the Japanese bunker system and then down past the old and new Japanese airstrips. You can still see the large bomb craters in the area and the positions of the Japanese anti aircraft guns. We will actually see a Japanese anti aircraft gun and radio set in its original position. We then walk through the village onto the beach for our short journey to the Buna Guest House. We are greeted on arrival by traditional dances and refreshments. Our Dinner tonight is a traditional feast. The Beach House is right on the beach and has fantastic views and great swimming. Tonight we feast and enjoy some relaxing drinks.

Overnight Buna

Day 10

After breakfast we depart for Gona, where we inspect the battle fields of this area. We visit the Gona Mission Station and discover a vehicle riddled with bullets from the war. We get to see the strategic positions of both the Australian and Japanese. Mid morning we depart Popondetta for our flight back to Port Moresby.

Overnight Port Moresby Hotel

Note: Accommodation along the Kokoda Track is camping in tents

Kokoda Spirit reserves the right to vary the trek itinerary/schedule in the event of unforeseen circumstances