

## **Australian Spirit Lives on the Kokoda Track Why Trek with Kokoda Spirit?**

Not so long ago our national characteristics were clearly identifiable in most Australians and our Diggers, courage, endurance, mateship, sacrifice, ingenuity, integrity, teamwork, resilience and the like.

Clearly these traits didn't emerge overnight. They were honed by the challenges our forebears faced in surviving in our remarkable country, with its vast distances, harsh terrain and unpredictable climate. Australians in almost every sector overcame obstacles to build our Nation with a practical and pragmatic approach built up over long periods of hardship. The spirit needed to survive and grow was constantly tested. It produced generations of Australians capable of heroic struggles in their daily lives. The men of Kokoda are testament to the Australian Spirit.

Trekking Kokoda with Kokoda Spirit is an experience not just a holiday. We see things as an explorer, historian and adventurer that tourist and Military trekking companies cannot.

Trekking Kokoda gives you a complete new mental re-set, a bank of memories and bragging rights over your friends.

When you trek Kokoda you are participating in a personal discovery experience; you truly are re living and participating in an historic and monumental adventure.

Wayne Wetherall Managing Director of Kokoda Spirit has had the privilege and opportunity to soak up the history and experience firsthand from some of the Kokoda Track Veterans including Stan Bisset 2/14<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Cecil Driscoll, Alan "Kanga" Moore, Ted Stuart and the son of Captain Sam Templeton, Reg Templeton from the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion and Keith Norrish, Bill Graydon, Jim Mackenzie, Jim Moir and Pel Williams of the 2/16<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Wayne has also been invited to speak in front of the Kokoda Veterans at their annual association dinners.

In January 2010, Wayne and the Kokoda Spirit team invited and escorted **Kokichi Nishimura "The Bone Man of Kokoda"** on a eight day fact finding tour of the Kokoda, Oivi, Gorari, Awala and northern beaches battlefields, including Nisimura's landing place of Basabua, Giruwa, Buna, Gona and Popenetta.

Kokoda Spirit's Wayne Wetherall and his team have been responsible for discovering some of the great mysteries associated with the Kokoda Track, including the lost and forgotten battlefields of Oivi, Gorari and Awala. These are the original and first battlefields that the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion first engaged the Japanese and defined the course of history of the Kokoda campaign.

Wayne and the Kokoda Spirit team recently unlocked the 68 year old mystery of the disappearance of **Captain Sam Templeton**. **Captain Sam Templeton** was the first Commander to lead the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion across the Kokoda Track; he was also the first commander to engage the Japanese in Battle and also became the first Australian Commander to die in the Kokoda Campaign.

Kokoda Spirit recently discovered sections of the original Wartime Kokoda Track. This section of the original Kokoda Trail track had been hidden under 68 years of dense jungle growth. After extensive research of old survey maps, WW11 maps, and an extensive helicopter survey, Wayne finally cut and trekked through the Jungle to discover sections of the original "Golden Stairs" across Imita Ridge not seen since the bloody battles of 1942.

Wayne and his team also uncovered and trekked a forgotten second "Kokoda Trail" near Nauro used on the Kokoda Track to out flank the Japanese. They also discovered and reopened the pre-war mail route from Kagi over the top of Mt Bellamy across Eora Creek and into Templeton's Crossing. This was the walking track used by B Company of the 39th Battalion on the original crossing of the Kokoda Trail. I walked a section of this track late last year and along with what the boys have told me on their latest adventure it is an exciting and tough walk. This

discovery finally allows the thousands of trekkers who trek the Kokoda Track each year to walk in the original footsteps of heroes.

There is some Kokoda trekking Companies, that pump their chests and tell you how good they are, how professional they are and how they are the only ones that have true Military Leaders as guides and the only ones to walk the original Wartime Track.

These same companies walk you in 'Platoon' size (33 trekkers plus) to give you the real military feel. Multiply these trekker numbers with nearly twice as many porters and you have a huge Congo line through the Jungle! They also walk you on occasions at night, what a dangerous thing to be doing! Not sure how you can take in the ambience and scenery of the Kokoda Track when you cannot see two feet in front. They also charge you a huge price for the privilege!

The Latin theory of 'caveat emptor' (**Let the buyer beware**) applies here. Make sure you choose the trekking company to suit your needs.

Kokoda Spirit can design a package to suit your requirements. Kokoda Spirit trekker numbers per trek average around 12 and our prices are great value for money.

Our Australian and PNG Guides may not have Military backgrounds but are Wilderness or Senior First Aid trained and have an absolute passion and knowledge of the battles, history and culture along the Kokoda Track.

It absolutely amazes me that some so called **ex Military History Companies** refer to sections of the Kokoda Track as the '**eco-tourist track!** These companies refer to the 'eco- tourist track as being easier with some battle sites along the way. What an absolute insult to the men that walked, fought and died along the Kokoda Track and the thousands of trekkers who have also trekked Kokoda to pay their respects.

These are the same companies that are not aware of the significant of the battles further north of Kokoda and do not take their trekkers to these places. In fact they cannot offer these battle sites as part of their itineraries as they are not aware of them.

Make sure the company that you choose has the knowledge, and ability to offer you options and packages to complete the entire Kokoda Track. The original Kokoda Track that Captain Sam Templeton and some members of the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion walked is 137 km long and runs from Owers Corner to the Kumusi River. You can add on another 25 km if you want to walk from McDonalds Corner, where the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion started and commenced their fighting withdrawal back from Awala, where they first engaged the Japanese, bringing the total kilometres to 156km.

Kokoda Spirit acknowledges that there is more than one Kokoda Track across the Owen Stanley Ranges, including multiple paths across Dump 44 to Iorabaiwa Ridge, Dump 66 across Imita Ridge, Ofi Creek, Dump 88, Brigade Hill, Mission Ridge and Efogi across Mt Bellamy to Myola, Templeton's Crossing and the eastern side of the Yodda Valley.

Kokoda Spirit has explored these other Kokoda Tracks and knows the rich history of the area.

The section of track we walk on takes you over the original "Golden Stairs", Imita Ridge, Iorabaiwa, Ofi Creek, Nauro, Menari, Brigade Hill, Myola, Templeton's Crossings 1 and 2 Eora Creek, Abuari, Alola, Isurava, Deniki Kokoda, Oivi, Gorari, Awala and the northern beaches battlefields of Buna, Gona and Sanananda.

These were all scenes of major battles and tragic loss of life along the Kokoda Track.

Rest assured when you walk Kokoda with Kokoda Spirit you are not only walking with a professional and knowledgeable company but the entire Kokoda Wartime Track not an "eco-tourist track".