

Papua New Guinea

I INTRODUCTION

Papua New Guinea, independent nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, located north of Australia and east of Indonesia. Papua New Guinea occupies the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, called the mainland, and several hundred smaller islands. The western part of New Guinea forms the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya. Most Papua New Guineans live in rural villages along the coast or in the rugged interior. High mountains and rain forests isolate many villages, although a network of roads and airstrips serves mines and plantations. Since the country's independence from Australia in 1975, town and city life has expanded as villagers have migrated to urban areas in search of employment. Port Moresby, located on the mainland's southeastern coast, is Papua New Guinea's capital and largest city.



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Papua New Guinean Flag and Anthem

II LAND AND RESOURCES

Papua New Guinea has a total area of 462,840 sq km (178,704 sq mi), of which nearly 90 percent is on the mainland. The smaller islands of Papua New Guinea all lie to the east and north. Among them are the Bismarck Archipelago, which includes New Britain, New Ireland, and Manus; the northern part of the Solomon Islands, including Bougainville and Buka; the Louisiade Archipelago; the Trobriand Islands; and the D'Entrecasteaux Islands.

A Physical Features

The mainland, which is wide in western Papua New Guinea and narrows in the southeast, has a rugged, mountainous interior. Steep slopes and jagged peaks stretch across the entire island from east to west. In Papua New Guinea, the mountains rise to a maximum elevation of 4,509 m (14,793

ft) at Mount Wilhelm in the Bismarck Range. Among the other ranges is the Owen Stanley in the southeast. Between the mountains are broad valleys that lie more than 1,500 m (4,900 ft) above sea level. These mountains and valleys constitute the central highlands. To the north of the central highlands is a low-lying, swampy plain. It was formed by sediment deposited by large rivers, including the Sepik and Ramu, which flow from the mountains into the Bismarck Sea. North of this plain are other mountain ranges that fringe the island's coast. These run from west to east and continue in scattered peaks offshore, forming the islands of New Britain, New Ireland, and Bougainville. Most of the other large islands are mountainous. A few islands, such as the Trobriands, are low coral formations.

The coastline of mainland Papua New Guinea is mostly low-lying. In the south it is deeply indented by river mouths and by a number of bays, such as Milne Bay at the eastern extremity. Most southward-flowing rivers empty into the Gulf of Papua. Major rivers of the mainland include the Fly, in the southwest; the Purari and Kikori, in the south; and the Sepik and Ramu, in the north. The Fly is navigable for about 800 km (about 500 mi) and the Sepik for about 500 km (about 300 mi).

Papua New Guinea lies along the so-called Ring of Fire, a belt of frequent tectonic activity in the Pacific Ocean caused by the collision of several continental plates (see Plate Tectonics). The country often experiences earthquakes and there are about 40 active volcanoes along the north coast of the mainland and on the smaller islands. Dramatic examples of tectonic activity include the 1951 eruption of Mount Lamington on the mainland and volcanic eruptions and earthquakes in 1937 and 1994 near Rabaul in eastern New Britain. The latter event, which the government described as the nation's worst recorded natural disaster, caused the evacuation of about 90,000 people.

B Plants and Animals

Three-quarters of Papua New Guinea has retained its natural vegetation, which is mainly dense rain forest. Sago palms and mangrove swamps cover parts of the mainland coast. Farther inland are tropical rain forests and grasslands. The mountainous areas also contain stands of pine trees and deciduous forests, and the tops of some mountains have alpine vegetation.

Papua New Guinea's wild animal life is abundant and varied. The majority of animals are similar to those found in Australia, but there are many species of both animals and plants that exist only in Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. Monotremes (egg-laying mammals) such as echidnas (spiny anteaters) are among the mammals commonly found on the island, as are marsupials, including tree kangaroos, wallabies, and phalangers. Wild pigs, rats, bats, and mice are also common mammals, some of which were introduced by early human immigrants. Papua New Guinea also has hundreds of species of tropical birds, among them many unique and protected birds of paradise. Reptile species, including snakes, lizards, and the New Guinea crocodile, are numerous. A number of crocodile farms export skins and sell the meat. Insects abound, including large and colorful butterfly species and malaria-carrying *Anopheles* mosquitoes. The coastal waters support many species of fish, shellfish, and turtles.

C Natural Resources

The principal natural resources in Papua New Guinea are mineral resources, particularly copper, and those derived from the forests and seas. In addition to copper, minerals include chromite, cobalt, gold, nickel, and silver. Papua New Guinea also has reserves of petroleum and natural gas.

D Climate

The climate of Papua New Guinea differs from place to place and from season to season, and is moderated by the mountains and seasonal monsoons. The lowland areas are generally hot and damp, while temperatures are cooler in mountainous areas. Temperatures average 27°C (81°F) in the lowlands and 20°C (68°F) in the highlands. Precipitation is generally heavy. Annual rainfall totals nearly 5,080 mm (200 in) in the Milne Bay region and about 5,840 mm (about 230 in) at the mouth of the Fly River. Port Moresby, which lies between these two points, is sheltered by the Owen Stanley Range and receives only about 1,145 mm (about 45 in) of rain annually.

Seasonal and regional climatic differences are partly caused by monsoons. Between May and August, during the country's coolest season, the southeast monsoon brings rain to mainland areas and to New Britain's southern coast. The rainiest areas on the mainland are the Gulf of Papua coast, the southern slopes of the central highlands, and the eastern tip of the Huon Peninsula north of Lae. Other mainland areas—including the coast near Port Moresby, the southwest coast, and the interior central highlands—are dry in these months. From January to April the northwest monsoon dominates the weather and climate, and the winds blow from the opposite direction. This is the wettest season in some northern areas. September to December is a period of variable weather. In the mountains of the central highlands, the normal wind and rain patterns change, giving certain valleys distinct climates of their own.

E Environmental Issues

Like many developing nations, Papua New Guinea faces significant environmental problems. Gold and copper mining has polluted waterways with untreated heavy-metal runoff. This runoff is particularly a problem in the Fly River. Soil erosion is a problem in areas cleared for agricultural use. Papua New Guinea contains some of the least disturbed tropical forests in the world, but some destruction of forest areas has occurred. The annual rate of deforestation is 0.36 percent (1990-2000). In part because of the loss of forest habitat, 265 (2000) species in Papua New Guinea are threatened with extinction.

Papua New Guinea is a poor country and environmental controls, which are costly, generally receive less attention than they do in developed nations. Still, the government is addressing some environmental issues. Concerns about deforestation, for example, prompted the government to cease issuing new logging permits for two years in the early 1990s. A forest conservation program is in force, and the government encourages ecotourism as a source of revenue. Papua New Guinea is party to international treaties concerning climate change, endangered species, marine dumping, ship pollution, tropical timber, and wetlands.

III THE PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea is part of Melanesia, a region of the Pacific populated by dark-skinned people, including Papuans and Melanesians.

A Population and Principal Cities



C. Seghers/Photo Researchers, Inc.

Papuans of Papua New Guinea

These Papuans from the central highlands of Papua New Guinea are wearing traditional dress and decoration, which is usually reserved for ceremonial or festive occasions. The central highlands are the most populous part of Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea's estimated population in 2001 was 5,049,055 and the population density was 11 persons per sq km (28 per sq mi). More than four-fifths of the people live on the mainland.

Nearly the entire population belongs to the diverse Papuan or Melanesian ethnic groups, which are closely related. There is a small minority of whites (mostly Australian) and Asians (mostly Chinese). Most Papuans live in the mountainous interior and the southern section of the mainland. The Melanesians primarily live in the north and east of the mainland, and on the islands. The largest cities are Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, Wewak, and Goroka, but most of these are relatively small (only Port Moresby and Lae have more than 50,000 people). The population is predominantly rural, with only 17 percent of the population residing in urban areas.

B Languages

More than 700 different languages and dialects are spoken among the Papuans and Melanesians.

Melanesian languages belong to the Austronesian language family, which includes most of the indigenous languages of the Pacific Islands. Papuan languages belong to a distinct language family called Papuan. The geographical distribution of Papuan languages is limited to New Guinea and the easternmost islands of Indonesia. Enga is the most common Papuan language and is spoken in the central highlands of mainland Papua New Guinea. English is the official language and the language of instruction in schools, a legacy of colonial rule. It is widely understood, but only a small proportion of the population can speak it fluently. The principal lingua franca, spoken by more than half the population, is Tok Pisin, a pidgin language based on English, German, and Melanesian languages.

C Religion

Most Papua New Guineans hold traditional beliefs, which are generally based on ancestor and spirit worship. About two-thirds of the people profess a Christian religion, but many of them also maintain traditional beliefs. Of the Christian faiths, Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism have the largest followings.

D Education

Papua New Guinea's literacy rate is 76.3 percent (2001). Education is available from preschool through the university level, although it is not compulsory. About 79.2 percent of children enroll in primary school, but very few complete more than a few years of formal education. Children begin attending school at age 7. At age 12 they move from local schools to provincial high schools for four years. A few become eligible to attend national high schools to prepare for university education. There are two universities in Papua New Guinea: the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby and the University of Technology in Lae.

E Way of Life



Christopher Arnesen/Tony Stone Images

Figure Carving and Masks

The natives of the Sepik Basin area of New Guinea have a rich and varied artistic tradition. This photo shows a carved and painted figure and some masks that are characteristic of the region.

Most people in villages follow a traditional way of life that revolves around subsistence agriculture and fishing. Extended families are the basic social unit. There are also many tribal groups, subdivided into clans and subclans. These groups help families preserve and transmit the store of traditional knowledge. They support clan members through major events such as birth, marriage, and death. Most villages are led by men, called "big men" in Tok Pisin, who win leadership positions by their own efforts. Hereditary chiefs are rare. The most experienced men in the village normally form a body of decision-makers, and no important actions are taken without their consent. Women typically do the planting. They rarely have much voice in village affairs. In some groups, however, people inherit land through the female line. Villagers live in small houses with frames built of wood, walls made of plaited bamboo strips or leaves, and roofs thatched with grass or palm leaves. Often there is a larger men's house and separate small cooking houses. Some villages have a medical post and small store.

The lifestyle in urban areas is significantly different. The larger towns and small cities, including Port Moresby, formed during the colonial era. They grew around the port areas that the foreign-owned mines and plantations required for the import and export of goods. Today, these urban areas also serve as local marketplaces and are the sites for government, banking, commercial, and cultural activities. Over time, the native people who have migrated to towns and cities from rural areas have lost their traditional ways of life. They have had to adjust, for example, to living in the cash economy, which requires that they purchase essential goods with currency instead of gathering, growing, or hunting what they need. With fewer family members to help them, people have formed new ties, usually with other migrants who speak their language. Housing in urban areas is scarce and expensive, and many new arrivals live in crowded squatter settlements, usually located on the fringe

of the urban area.

F Culture

The Papua New Guinea government encourages the continuation of traditional cultures and their arts and crafts, which include woodcarving, painting, body decoration, dance, and oral histories. The National Museum and Art Gallery, located in the Port Moresby suburb of Waigani, houses thousands of ethnographic artifacts.

G Social Problems

Like most developing nations, Papua New Guinea has a variety of social problems. Because there is limited housing and other infrastructure in urban areas, rural-to-urban migrants have created squatter settlements on the periphery of towns and cities. In Port Moresby, these settlements contain as much as half the city's total population. They are generally cramped and lack adequate sanitation facilities. Unemployment and underemployment are high, which further aggravates the situation. The crime rate is also high, and incidences of violent crime have increased significantly since the 1980s. Intertribal violence also sometimes occurs.

IV ECONOMY

Papua New Guinea's economy is heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture and fishing activities, and on the export of primary commodities. These include plantation crops, forest products, and minerals. Some 30 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) is derived from agriculture, forestry, and fishing; and 46 percent from industry, principally mining but including manufacturing and construction. In 1999 GDP was \$3.6 billion, or about \$760 a person. Despite government efforts to promote tourism, widespread crime and perceived political instability have caused the tourism industry to stagnate.

A Agriculture



F. McConnaughey/Photo Researchers, Inc.

Farm in Papua New Guinea

Farming is the most important economic activity of Papua New Guinea. There is some plantation agriculture, but most farms, such as this one in the central highlands, operate on a subsistence level.

Agriculture, performed mainly at a subsistence level, is the most important economic activity in Papua New Guinea. More than two-thirds of the working-age population are subsistence farmers, growing crops to meet their own needs and not to trade for currency. Typically, villagers create their subsistence gardens by slash-and-burn methods—periodically clearing and planting new plots in the forest, while the land most recently farmed is allowed to revert to bush so the soil can regain its fertility. Coconuts, bananas, taro, and yams are important food crops; sweet potatoes, which originated in South America, are particularly important in the highlands. Other fruits and vegetables are also grown. Pigs are a highly prized food and are eaten at village feasts. Subsistence fishing and hunting are also important agricultural activities.

Villagers occasionally grow crops for export, although most commercial crops are raised on plantations. In the early 1990s, agriculture accounted for about 9 percent of export earnings. Coconut palms, which supply copra (dried coconut meat) and coconut oil, are important in the coastal lowlands. Other lowland export crops are cacao, rubber, and oil palms. In the highlands, coffee is the most important commercial crop; some tea is also grown. These export crops are produced on Australian-owned plantations, which typically hire wage laborers from nearby villages. The government has promoted export crops over food crops, which has forced the growing urban population to depend increasingly on imported foods.

B Forestry and Fishing

Papua New Guinea produces considerable quantities of timber, and wood chip production and milling

are of some importance. Much of the freshwater and marine fishing is of a subsistence nature, but there is some commercial fishing, especially for prawns, tuna, and sharks (for shark oil). Fishing licenses sold to foreign fishing fleets are also an important revenue source.

C Mining and Manufacturing

Extractive activities, especially mining, are the most important contributors to Papua New Guinea's cash economy. In the mid-1990s, crude materials, mineral fuels, and gold generated 70 percent of export earnings. By far, the most important exports are copper and copper concentrates, which in most years account for more than 50 percent of export earnings. Mining for ores rich in copper and gold and containing some silver began at Panguan on Bougainville in 1972 and at Ok Tedi in the northwestern highlands in 1984. Political turmoil on Bougainville, however, has halted mining there. Gold mining began in the late 1980s at Porgera, near Ok Tedi; on Misima Island, off the southeast coast; and on Lihir Island, off New Ireland.

Most of the country's manufacturing industry is limited to producing basic consumer items such as processed food, beer and other beverages, and textiles. Wood products are also important.

D Energy

Thermal stations burning refined petroleum supply the majority of Papua New Guinea's electricity. Although the country is a producer and exporter of crude petroleum, it must import the refined petroleum needed for these stations. People in rural areas and in poorer parts of cities and towns rely principally on firewood to meet their energy needs. Hydroelectric stations also generate electricity.

E Finance and Trade

The unit of currency in Papua New Guinea is the kina, which is divided into 100 toea (2.57 kina equal U.S.\$1; 1999 average). The Bank of Papua New Guinea is the central bank. Exports in 1999 were \$1.9 billion, and imports were \$1.2 billion. Like most developing countries, the majority of Papua New Guinea's export earnings were derived from primary commodities—agricultural, fishing, mining, and forestry products. The principal exports were copper ore and concentrates, coffee, timber, cocoa beans, and palm oil; the principal imports were machinery and transport equipment, other manufactured goods, food, and chemicals and petroleum products. The leading purchasers of exports are Australia, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and the United States; chief sources of imports are Australia, the United States, Singapore, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

F Transportation and Communication

Papua New Guinea's rugged terrain makes the construction of surface transportation extremely difficult. There are very few roads and no railroads. Of the roads that do exist, only 4 percent are paved. Air service provides important links with many areas. Air Niugini, the government-owned national airline, offers domestic and international connections. Port Moresby is the major airport and

seaport. There are several major daily newspapers, as well as a major weekly publication and numerous smaller newspapers. Papua New Guinea has three radio networks and most areas are served by at least one. Two television stations broadcast from Port Moresby, although their signals do not reach all parts of the country and in 1997 there were only 9.3 televisions for every 1,000 people.

V GOVERNMENT

Papua New Guinea is governed under a 1975 constitution. As a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the country's head of state is the British sovereign, who is represented by a governor-general appointed by the sovereign on the recommendation of Papua New Guinea's parliament. Legislative power is vested in the unicameral National Parliament (formerly the House of Assembly), which is made up of 109 members who are popularly elected to terms of up to five years. Voting is universal for all citizens age 18 or older. The main executive body, the National Executive Council, is responsible to parliament. A prime minister presides over the council and is the head of government. The governor-general appoints and dismisses the prime minister on the recommendation of the National Parliament. The governor-general also appoints and dismisses ministers of the National Executive Council on the recommendation of the prime minister.

Since Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia in 1975, the country's politics have been relatively unstable. There are numerous political parties, and many parliamentarians have only mild party loyalty; loosely formed coalition governments have fallen apart several times. Major political groups include the Pangu Pati, the People's Progress Party, the Melanesian Alliance, the National Party, and the People's Democratic Movement. There are also numerous smaller political parties.

Papua New Guinea's judicial system is independent of other government branches. The highest tribunal is the Supreme Court, which handles matters of constitutional interpretation. The National Court deals with civil and criminal cases. Lesser judicial bodies include district, local, and wardens' courts. The head of state appoints the chief justice, and the Judicial and Legal Services Commission appoints other judges.

VI HISTORY

The first settlers to Papua New Guinea migrated from Southeast Asia probably at least 40,000 years ago during the Pleistocene Epoch, or ice age. At that time the polar ice caps were larger than they are today, and with more water locked in the ice caps, the oceans were considerably shallower. Many of the present Indonesian islands were part of the Asian landmass, so there were fewer water barriers to human migration. New Guinea was attached to Australia and to Indonesia's easternmost islands by a land bridge, although it was separated from Indonesia's central islands by water. The earliest immigrants to New Guinea were few in number and were hunter-gatherers. About 5,000 years ago another wave of people migrated from Southeast Asia and settled along the northern coast of New Guinea and on the nearby islands. These newcomers lived in villages and raised pigs and chickens, made clay pots, and grew food crops such as taro and yams. The people who had come earlier gradually adopted these new ways.

Seafarers from China and the Malay empires arrived in the area long before Europeans first visited the islands in the 17th century. The Chinese and Southeast Asians brought goods for trade and took slaves from New Guinea. Portuguese explorers reported sighting the New Guinea coast as early as 1512, but it was not until 1526 that another Portuguese, Jorge de Meneses, landed on the island. Inigo Ortiz de Retes, the leader of a Spanish expedition that sailed near the island in 1545, named it New Guinea because he thought the islanders resembled those of Africa's Guinea coast. During the next three centuries many foreigners landed along the coast but did not venture far inland for fear of catching malaria or being attacked by headhunters. In the 1870s European missionaries, miners, and traders began to settle the eastern New Guinea coast, and some pushed inland along the larger rivers.

Meanwhile, European powers were claiming land throughout Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Australian continent for their empires. In 1828 Portugal annexed the western half of New Guinea (now the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya), and by 1829 Britain claimed the entire Australian continent. In the early 1880s the British colonial government in Queensland, across the Torres Strait, became alarmed by German commercial activity in New Guinea. Assuming an imminent German annexation of New Guinea land and fearing the security threat this posed, Queensland claimed southeastern New Guinea for the British crown in 1883. The British government in London did not immediately recognize the action, although pressure from its Australian and New Zealand colonies prompted Britain to formally establish a protectorate over southeastern New Guinea in 1884. A few days earlier Germany had claimed northeastern New Guinea, and in 1885 the British and German empires agreed upon the borders of British New Guinea and German New Guinea.

At first neither colonial empire was much concerned with New Guinea. Britain's interests were primarily strategic, although a small community of miners developed after gold was discovered in the late 1880s. In 1901 Britain's Australian colonies became states in the independent Commonwealth of Australia. The new nation assumed the administrative responsibility of British New Guinea, which was formally transferred to Australian jurisdiction in 1906 and renamed Papua. The Australian lieutenant governor pursued the sometimes-conflicting policies of exploiting Papua's natural resources and improving the lives of the Papuans. However, because Australian subsidies were low, there was limited progress made with either initiative. Unlike in German New Guinea, plantation agriculture was slow to develop in Papua; this was in part because Australia protected its domestic produce market, which greatly hindered Papuan exports.

Initially, a German company was charged with administering German New Guinea. When the company's plantations failed to make a profit, the German government assumed control of the colonial administration in 1899. Germany concerned itself primarily with improving the lives of the foreign settlers. Although the Germans introduced commercial plantations, created a small road network, and improved sanitation, the lives of the Papuans were either little improved or made harsher. At the beginning of World War I (1914-1918) an Australian military force occupied German New Guinea and remained there throughout the war. After Germany's defeat, the League of Nations granted Australia a mandate to rule the German colony, which was renamed the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Plantation agriculture expanded and the discovery of gold in the 1920s created a gold rush. The Australians extended the education system, but they were generally less concerned with native rights in the mandated territory than in Papua.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces occupied the mandated territory and penetrated to within 56 km (35 mi) of Port Moresby. A United States and Australian counteroffensive drove the Japanese from Papua before the end of January 1943, but the war deeply affected the Papuans, who had been largely unaware of the outside world. During the war, they suffered the intrusions of more than 1 million foreign soldiers and the accompanying military equipment, and they witnessed terrible battles and devastation. One impact of the war period was the formation of cargo cults. Possession of Western goods—for example, the cargo from the war period—came to typify prosperity, but Papuans generally did not understand how the goods were produced. Cults developed around leaders who prophesized that their ancestors would bring material goods by plane or some other “magic” means. Some cults built landing strips, believing that planes would continue to arrive bringing cargo. Cargo cults typically disbanded when the prophesies were unrealized.

In 1946 the United Nations granted Australia a trusteeship over the Territory of New Guinea. Although Australia maintained separate statistics for New Guinea, it administered the territory and Papua as one. The two territories increasingly became known as Papua New Guinea, and the native people came to be called Papua New Guineans. The administration continued its efforts to further education and to develop the economy.

In order to prepare the territories for eventual autonomy and independence, the Australians sought to encourage democratic institutions. In 1951 a countrywide legislative council was created; it gave way in 1964 to a House of Assembly. On December 1, 1973, Papua and New Guinea became self-governing as Papua New Guinea. The country became fully independent on September 6, 1975.

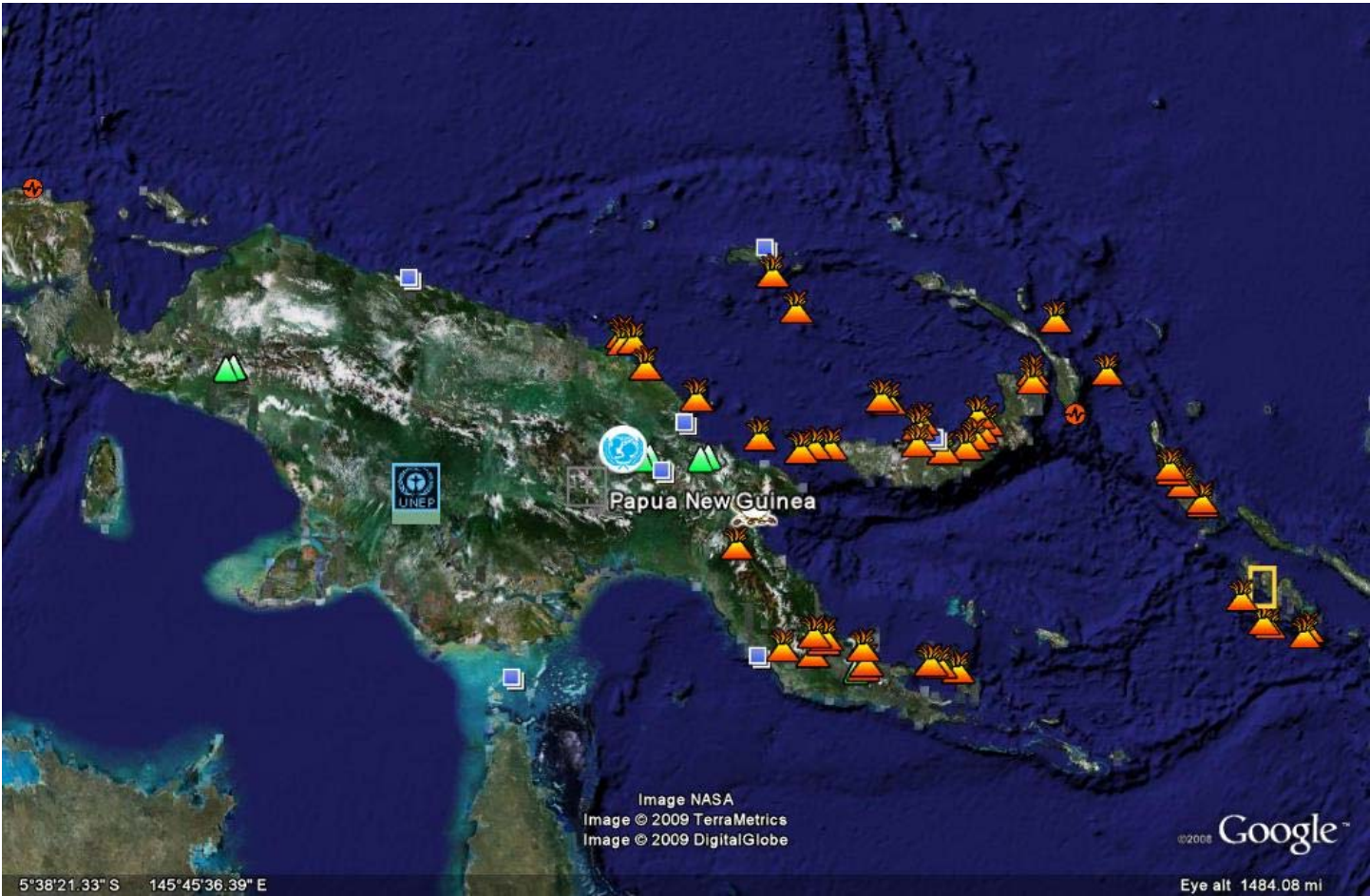
The Australian administration had created a strong central government, which the new government inherited. This framework soon proved unsuitable, however, partly because most of the population was rural and had little interest in national affairs. Several strong regional separatist movements arose in the 1970s, of which the most significant was on Bougainville. From 1976 to 1978 the government decentralized the administration by establishing elected provincial governments with a degree of autonomy; this partially satisfied separatist demands. In 1988, however, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) formed to press the government for further changes. Landowners on Bougainville had received no compensation for copper mining that had occurred since 1972, and islanders were concerned about the environmental damage caused by the mining. Violence ensued as the BRA increasingly favored the secession of North Solomons Province (which includes Bougainville). Hundreds of people died as a direct consequence of the violence. Thousands more are believed to have died from hardships caused by an economic blockade, which resulted in suspension of essential services in areas controlled by the BRA. The government and BRA representatives periodically met to negotiate the crises, and in May 1998 the two sides signed a peace agreement.

In addition to continued unrest in Bougainville, since 1977 Papua New Guinea has also been affected by unrest in the neighboring Irian Jaya Province of Indonesia. Fighting occurred near the border area and many Papua New Guineans sympathized with the Irian rebels, whose goal was to end Indonesian rule and unify the island. Thousands of people have since fled Irian Jaya for Papua New Guinea to escape reprisals by the Indonesian army. Although Papua New Guinea and Indonesia signed a border treaty in 1984 and a treaty of friendship and cooperation in 1986, their relations have remained strained.

Contributed By:

[Richard Ulack](#)

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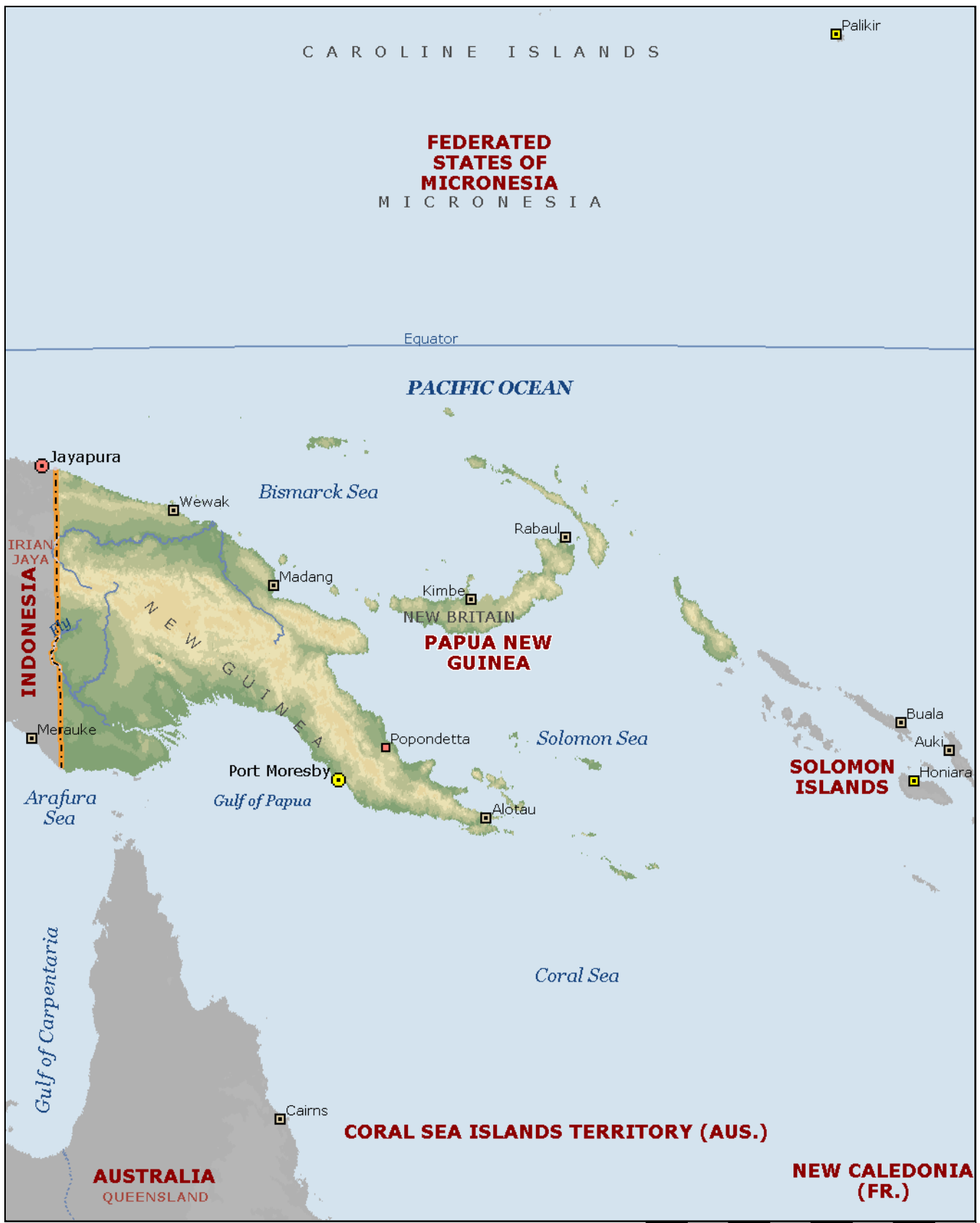


5°38'21.33" S 145°45'36.39" E

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Papua New Guinea
Pacific Ocean

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F. McConnaughey/Photo Researchers, Inc.

Farm in Papua New Guinea

Farming is the most important economic activity of Papua New Guinea. There is some plantation agriculture, but most farms, such as this one in the central highlands, operate on a subsistence level.

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Papua New Guinea

Average temperature, rainfall and snowfall information is available for the following climate stations in Papua New Guinea

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Official name: Independent State of Papua New Guinea

Capital: Port Moresby

Area: total: 462,840 sq km
land: 452,860 sq km
water: 9,980 sq km

Climate: tropical; northwest monsoon (December to March), southeast monsoon (May to October); slight seasonal temperature variation

Location: Oceania, group of islands including the eastern half of the island of New Guinea between the Coral Sea and the South Pacific Ocean, east of Indonesia

Geographic coordinates: 6 00 S, 147 00 E

Comparative Area: slightly larger than California

Land boundaries: total: 820 km
border countries: Indonesia 820 km

Coastline: 5,152 km

Terrain: mostly mountains with coastal lowlands and rolling foothills

Elevation extremes: lowest point: Pacific Ocean 0 m
highest point: Mount Wilhelm 4,509 m

Map of Papua New Guinea

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General info

Entity:

Papua New Guinea

Capital:

Port Moresby

Population (2008-07-01):

5,931,769 (CIA)

Area:

462,840 sq.km.

Country code:

PG

Region:

Melanesia

Papua New Guinea

Administrative units

administrative units	capital	area (sq.km.)	population 1990-07-11 census	population 2000-07-09 census
Central	Port Moresby	29,500	141,195	183,153
Simbu	Kundiawa	6,100	183,849	258,776
East New Britain	Rabaul	15,500	185,459	220,035
East Sepik	Wewak	42,800	254,371	341,583
Eastern Highlands	Goroka	11,200	300,648	429,480
Enga	Wabag	12,800	235,561	289,299
Gulf	Kerema	34,500	68,737	105,050
Madang	Madang	29,000	253,195	362,805
Manus	Lorengau	2,100	32,840	43,589
Milne Bay	Alotau	14,000	158,780	209,054
Morobe	Lae	34,500	380,117	536,917
National Capital District	Port Moresby	240	195,570	252,469
New Ireland	Kavieng	9,600	86,999	118,148
North Solomons	Arawa	9,300	154,000	141,161
Oro (Northern)	Popondetta	22,800	96,462	132,714
Southern Highlands	Mendi	23,800	317,347	544,352
West New Britain	Kimbe	21,000	130,190	184,838
West Sepik	Vanimo	36,300	139,917	185,790
Western	Daru	99,300	110,420	152,067
Western Highlands	Mount Hagen	8,500	336,178	439,085
total		462,840	3,761,954	5,130,365

source: [NSO](#), Papua New Guinea.

note: Simbu aka Chimbu.

Main cities

name	population 2000-07-01 estimate
Port Moresby	173,500
Lae	78,038
Mount Hagen	27,782
Madang	27,394

source: [United Nations Statistics Division](#).