

## So you are doing a medical elective in Kompiam ...

This document is to help you organise your elective to Kompaim District Hospital.

### Getting here

Most people will not get a direct flight to PNG. They will first fly to Brisbane/Cairns and then into Port Moresby (POM). The best option is to get a flight to Cairns travelling any airline and stay overnight and then catch an Air Niugini flight to Port Moresby with a direct connecting flight to Mount Hagen the same day.

The benefit of this arrangement is twofold. 1. There are roughly 3 flights leaving from Cairns to PNG everyday so you have plenty of choice. 2. If you fly Air Niugini for the PNG leg of the trip and you miss your connecting flight due to delays Air Niugini will pay for overnight accommodation in Port Moresby. The same applies for your flights returning to Australia.

Staying in Port Moresby overnight for a connecting flight to Mount Hagen is not the best option. It may seem cheaper to get a Virgin flight all the way to POM and stay overnight in POM but the accommodation costs in POM will far outweigh any extra costs incurred from getting an Air Niugini flight. If you would like to stay in POM be sure to budget about \$400 AUS (800 Kina) a night for accommodation, with roughly 50-100Kina extra for food.

In addition the security risks in POM make tourist travel difficult. There are taxis available but not a reliable network. In reality you have to organise your accommodation beforehand and arrange for a hotel pick-up. The hotel will pick you up from the airport and transport you to your hotel and the next day drop you back the airport. Although the security risks in PNG are greatly overstated POM is probably not a place where an inexperienced traveler can just walk around. This applies to both guys and girls. Really it's best to go straight to Mount Hagen.

The two airlines that operate in PNG are Air Niugini and Airlines PNG. All the staff at Kompiam travel Air Niugini because they are the larger more reliable airline of the two and the Airlines PNG airline had a plane crash a few years back. There is very little price difference between the two.



The weight allowed for Air Niugini flights is 16kg but you may be allowed more if you have an Air Niugini flight booked from Qantas – usually you can get 23kg for the domestic sector if you come through same day on an international flight.

If possible arrive in Mount Hagen on Monday or Tuesday as the Kompiam staff usually has business to attend to in Mount

Hagen on these days so they don't need to make a special trip down. This means you will get to Kompiam on Wednesday. This of course has to be balanced with the school's requirement for the length of the placement.

## VISAs

Don't worry about sending your passport away to get pre-approval for visas, at the airport is fine. If you are on a 4 week or 6 week placement you can get by on an 8 week tourist visa that you can buy once you arrive at the airport for 100 Kina (\$50AUS). They do not accept Australian dollars nor do they provide change so make sure you have at least 100 Kina when arriving to PNG.

Everyone I talked to said they told customs they were here for a medical placement and had no trouble getting a tourist visa. You may want to print out an email confirming your placement from Kompiam just in case you get asked.

## Money

Exchange at least 100Kina (this will cost roughly \$70Aus) in Australia so you have enough for the visa. You can do this at Brisbane/ Cairns airport and if you are really organized from your own local bank but this may take a couple of weeks with not much advantage. The exchange rates in Australia are pretty poor so only exchange what you absolutely need (at least 100Kina, 200Kina to be able to afford some lunch/dinner when you arrive in Mount Hagen).

When you get to the international airport and past customs you can change money in the terminal as long as you have a passport. You can exchange Australian cash notes for Kina. I'm unsure if you can withdraw money from a card. The exchange rate is not as bad as in Australian but still not amazing.

The main bank here is BSP but there are also ANZ terminals that you can withdraw money from using a normal Australian keycard. It costs roughly 15Kina (\$7.5) for each transaction from the ATM but you also get charged by your own bank back home. This option still ends up being cheaper than getting money exchanged in Australian or at the PNG airport as you get a much better exchange rate. I'm not sure if there is an ATM at the airport but when you arrive in Mount Hagen the Kompiam staff can take you to the ATM in town.

The difficulty comes in getting the right tender; having 100 & 50 Kina notes in Kompiam is the equivalent to having no money at all. Most of the ATMs will dispense 100 kina notes but there are very few places in Mount Hagen and nowhere in Kompiam that will accept 100Kina notes. You really have to try to get a selection of 2Kina notes (as much as possible), 5,10 and 20Kina notes. Do this by buying small items in Best Buy (Mount Hagen Grocery store) and getting



the change. If going out for dinner in Mount Hagen purchase your meal with your large notes.

There are some places in Mount Hagen that will accept card but mostly you will be relying on cash. You will find it hard to use a credit card. If you do want to put expenses on credit you may have to just accept the 20% cash advance fee and withdraw from an ATM.

Accommodation costs can be transferred to Kompiam directly so you do not need to carry a large amount of cash. Money will be spent on mostly food, meals out in Mt. Hagen and any items such as billums (bags) you may want to buy while in PNG.

## How much money will I need?

For a 4-6 week placement it will be handy to have roughly 1,000Kina in cash (\$500AUS). It may seem like a lot of cash to carry in a place where theft is common but ATM access is limited in Mount Hagen and nonexistent in Kompiam. If you separate your cash out and carry some on you and a portion in each of your luggage bags if something does get stolen you haven't lost all your money. The majority of it will be spent on groceries during your first few days in Mount Hagen so you will not be carrying around a large amount for long.

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|---|---|------------------------|
| Accommodation while in POM.   | 300 -800 Kina /night  | \$120-350AUS           |
| Accommodation costs in Mount Hagen if staying in the Baptist Compound   | 50 Kina/night   | \$25 AUS               |
| Accommodation staying elsewhere in Mount Hagen.<br>(The Kompiam staff will try their best to make room for you at the Baptist compound but sometimes it cannot be helped.)<br>The Kimininga is right next door to the Baptist compound whereas the highlander is in town.         | 300 Kina/night (Kimininga)<br>450 Kina/night (highlander, starting rate)          | \$150 AUS<br>\$225 AUS |
| Accommodation in Kompiam  | 50 Kina /night  | \$25 AUS               |
| Groceries for 4-6 week placement  | Roughly 800 Kina  | \$400 AUS              |
| Dinners in Mt Hagen.<br>Mostly you will eat out for dinners while in Mt. Hagen but most lunches and breakfast will be at the compound. Like every restaurant it depends on what you order.  | 20-80Kina a meal including a drink  | \$10-\$40 AUS          |
| Spending money.<br>There is very little extra to spend your money on but you may like to buy a billum (a traditional bag) as a souvenir for yourself or a family member. Plus the locals at Kompiam love to see visitors sporting a billum, it's quite the topic of conversation. | Roughly 200 Kina<br>Billums range from 40kina to 80Kina depending on the quality. | \$100AUS               |

## Accommodation

You will stay in the student house at the Kompiam hospital with other students. It is very comfortable accommodation.

Facilities:

- Most likely have your own room
- Hot showers
- Gas stove/oven
- Stove top kettle
- Equipped kitchen
- Fridge
- TV and DVD player (no port to connect to USB)
- Bedding supplied
- Towels supplied
- Washing machine



## Food and Drink

Fresh produce will be bought at the Mount Hagen markets and other groceries including meat will be purchased at Best Buy Grocery store in Hagen. Try to buy all your dry groceries in that you will need for your entire rotation and enough fresh produce for 2 weeks. The Kompiam staff makes regular trips to Hagen and can pick you up some groceries if you get stuck but it certainly helps them out if you only have small shopping lists of mostly fresh produce to buy. The student fridge is a standard size so keep in mind that it will only hold roughly 2 weeks of fresh produce and you may be sharing the space with other people. If you buy too much fresh food you may find that it is going off faster than you can eat it.

What I found surprising at Kompiam was how much entertaining occurred. It's very common to have someone over for dinner at least once a week, even more likely that you will be invited over to someone's house for tea and then there is pot luck dinner every Saturday where everyone prepares a main and dessert dish to share. If you are staying with other students it will be likely to take turns cooking dinner. So remember to buy foods to share and dessert ingredients. Everyone loves chocolate, custard and biscuits. Mince meat to make spag bol, a chicken to roast or ingredients for a veggie curry all make great entertaining meals.

What you eat at home and what you eat at Kompiam may be very different just due to what groceries are available to buy. When at Best Buy I didn't buy flour because I never cook with it at home, I don't even eat bread at home, but while at Kompiam flour seemed to be a vital component to every meal. I made my own bread, pizza dough, pancakes, zucchini slice, cakes, banana bread, cheese sauce the list goes on. So even if you have never used flour before in your life get some flour in Mount Hagen.

Some things are hard to find in Kompiam and it may be best to bring from Australia. Everyone here talks about the quality of the tuna. Diane tuna is terrible but Dolly tuna is actually pretty good. If you are

obsessed with tuna it may be an idea to bring some from Australia but just remember cans weigh a lot. If you are a tea or coffee addict you may want to bring your own supply as both tea and coffee are pretty poor here. Spices are quite expensive in PNG and if you buy the packets back at home it is very cheap and light to carry. Nuts are best brought from Australia. Chocolate is very expensive in PNG, a Cadbury block of chocolate is roughly 20Kina (\$10 AUS)!! So bring some blocks with you, even if you don't eat chocolate they are great presents to give to kids or to whoever invites you around for tea. Coco powder is really difficult to get in PNG so bring a box for yourself and a few as gifts, you will be very popular. There is no such thing as salami here in PNG so bring some from Australia if you want it. The kids here love Nutella (really expensive here in PNG ~20kina) so if you have some room in your luggage pack a few jars. A tube of vegemite is always a must have travel item.

Coming to PNG you think food will be really cheap but it is actually on par with Australian prices if not more. However the fresh produce at the markets is cheap; this is where all your 2kina notes get used. So in a way it all balances out.

Kompam does have a canteen that supplies a small range of groceries. They supply rice, eggs, coke-a-cola, soap, noodles and toilet paper. The Kompam market is pretty much on every day but it's biggest on Wednesday. You can get bananas, occasionally pineapples, peanuts and greens (ie. leaves you can eat) from the market.



Some fresh food will last longer than others. Cabbage, zucchini, carrots, onions, green tomatoes, potatoes, sugar cane and sugar plums last for quite a long time especially when kept out of the fridge. While broccoli, lettuce, avocado and ripe tomatoes have to be eaten very quickly. You can get all the ginger you can eat for 2kina and plenty of garlic as well. At the Hagen markets the variety of fresh food will change all the time so just try to get a range of produce.

Keep in mind that there is no microwave at Kompam. Everything that you cook/reheat will have to be done on the gas stove, grill or oven. When the generator is on between 6.30pm and 10pm you will have access to an electric kettle, electric toaster and an electric beater. There is no rice cooker. There is a stove top kettle for when the power is out.

There is no shortage of clean drinking water at Kompam. Kompam gets its water supply from rain water tanks and it rains a lot!

### Sample Grocery List at best buy:

| Item  | Comments and quantity for 6 weeks   | Rough Price |
|-------|---|-------------|
| Flour | Plain 4kg (if you want to make bread, 2kg if not making bread)<br>Wholemeal 2kg<br>Self-Raising Flour 1kg | ~9Kina      |

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|---|--|--|
| <b>Yeast</b>  |  |  |
| <b>Coffee/tea</b>   |  | Coffee 100g 25Kina                                     |
| <b>Tang to share</b>                                      | This is cordial powder that comes in different flavours.<br>Good to share  | ~1kina per packet                                      |
| <b>Rice</b>   | Maybe 1-2 kg. More if you want to eat rice every day.  | 1kg-5Kina  |
| <b>Pasta</b>  | Around 3 packs, possible 4   | 6Kina/packet   |
| <b>Cheese</b>   | 2 -3 blocks of small if you don't intend to use it much or 2 blocks of 500g block if you like cheese.  | 250g- 12Kina   |
| <b>Butter</b>   | Block butter for cooking and spreadable for sliced bread   | 6-10Kina per block                                     |
| <b>Large crackers</b>                                     | Great for when you have no bread for lunch.<br>If you really want to be PNG buy some beef flavoured crackers they are called Navy biscuits or Hi-Way biscuits  | Lae beef navy- 2Kina                                   |
| <b>Muesli Bars</b>  | For patrol   | 14Kina/pack  |
| <b>Cereal</b>   | Sometimes out of weetbix. Porridge is a good option but you will have to make it stove top.<br>Oats- 2x 1kg boxes  | Uncle Toby oats 25Kina a packet                        |
| <b>Bread</b>  | Good to have a small supply even if you intend on making your own bread.<br>2 loaves if you intended to make your own bread but really depended on how much you eat.   | 4Kina a loaf   |
| <b>Some sort of spread (peanut butter, jam, vegemite)</b> |  | Peanut butter- 16Kina                                  |
| <b>Tuna</b>   | Dolly is best<br>Under no circumstances get Diane  | Dolly- 3Kina/can                                       |
| <b>Milk Powder</b>  | If you don't like powder you can get long life milk but no fresh milk is available.  | 200g powder- 5Kina                                     |
| <b>Sugar</b>  |  |  |
| <b>Cake pre-mix packets</b>                               | They are great for desserts at pot-luck dinners and even if you are used to making cakes from scratch they can be a good option because sometimes it's hard to get every ingredient you need individually<br>1-3 packets | Range 8-18 Kina (anything with chocolate is expensive) |
| <b>Noodles</b>  | Good option for patrol or lunch.<br>10 packets   | 0.8-1Kina each   |
| <b>Maple syrup for pancakes</b>                           |  |  |
| <b>Pasta sauce</b>  |  | 12Kina/jar   |



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|   |   | Pesto 13Kina/jar                    |
| <b>Tomato paste</b>                     |   | 13Kina                              |
| <b>Biscuits</b>                         | They have Arnotts varieties   | 10 Kina a packet                    |
| <b>Popping Corn</b>                     | ie. pop corn  | 3.5Kina                             |
| <b>Chocolate</b>                        |   | 18-20 Kina                          |
| <b>Cans:</b>                            |   |                                     |
| <b>Tomatoes</b>                         |   | 5kina/each                          |
| <b>Chickpeas</b>                        |   | 7Kina/can                           |
| <b>Lentils</b>                          |   |                                     |
| <b>Kidney beans</b>                     |   |                                     |
| <b>Baked Beans</b>                      |   | 7Kina/each                          |
| <b>Refried Beans</b>                    |   | 7Kina/each                          |
| <b>Beetroot</b>                         |   | 6Kina/each                          |
| <b>Corned beef</b>                      |   | 10Kina/each                         |
| <b>Eggs</b>                             | You can get eggs at the Kompiam canteen so you don't need to worry about transporting them. | Roughly 1 Kina at Kompiam canteen   |
| <b>Frozen vegetables</b>                | 1 small bag   |                                     |
| <b>Mince meat</b>                       | Get the top of the range mince.<br>1.5-2kg  | Topside mince- 30Kina/kg            |
| <b>Other meat- chicken, bacon</b>       | Can buy frozen whole chickens or filleted pieces.<br>2 chickens                             | Chicken breast- 18-20Kina/kg        |
| <b>Onions –brown and red</b>            |   | Brown- 6-8Kina/kg<br>Red- 12Kina/kg |
| <b>Lentil soup mix/green split peas</b> | Good for soup making  |                                     |
| <b>Chicken and beef stock cubes</b>     | Vegetable is usually not stocked.<br>1 small pack of each                                   |                                     |
| <b>Dry red lentils</b>                  | 1 pack  |                                     |
| <b>Curry powder/paste</b>               |   |                                     |
| <b>Coconut cream/milk</b>               |   | 9Kina/can                           |
| <b>Soy Sauce</b>                        |   |                                     |
| <b>Balsamic Vinegar</b>                 | A luxury for salads.  |                                     |
| <b>Custard Powder</b>                   | Great for pot luck dinner desserts  |                                     |
| <b>Cooking oil</b>                      | Olive oil is very expensive. Other oils are very cheap.                                     | Range- 5Kina to 60Kina              |
| <b>Spices</b>                           | A fair selection at best buy but cheaper in Australia                                       | 5Kina/jar                           |
| <b>Salt and pepper</b>                  | There is usually a supply at the house. So just buy the smallest size to keep the stock up. | Salt 120g-2Kina                     |
| <b>Dish washing detergent</b>           |   | 5-6Kina                             |
| <b>Toilet Paper</b>                     | Lots!<br>Get 9 rolls to be on the safe side for 1 (6weeks). Can double as great tissues     | 5-10Kina                            |
| <b>Washing machine powder</b>           | About 400g to be safe   | 2Kina                               |
| <b>Bleach for general cleaning</b>      | Smallest bottle (200ml)   | 2Kina                               |

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|----------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Cling wrap</b>                |        |
| <b>Al-foil</b>                   | 15Kina |
| <b>Baking paper</b>              | 15Kina |
| <b>Pens</b>                      |        |
| <b>Lighter for the gas stove</b> |        |

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## What to wear

You want to bring clothes that you are comfortable in, not afraid of ruining and are fairly modest. Laundry can only be done when the generator is on at night and you need to share the washing machine, so try to bring enough undies and socks to last 7-8 days.

For girls, clothing should be modest but still comfortable. Skirts or ¾ shorts that finish just below the knees are fine. T-shirts are good options, but make sure they have some sort of sleeve. Cotton button up shirts and cargo pants are comfortable options. Spaghetti strap singlets and skin-tight clothing are not appropriate. You don't need to buy clothes that are really baggy and too big but just make sure your not sporting skin-tight hipster jeans.

Weather at Kompiam ranges from quite hot to a bit chilly. Bring cotton/cotton blend clothing and ¾ shorts for the heat in day. A light jumper or a zip-up light jacket will help for the chill at night. A pair of tracksuit pants will be great for night. Thermals are not required.

## What to bring

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| <b>Medical</b>     | Stethoscope<br>Head torch<br>Pen torch<br>Surgical safety glasses  |
| <b>Books</b>       | Very little room and Dr. Mills has a great library so keep to a minimum. I didn't even bring the oxford handbooks and I didn't miss them.<br>Books that came in handy:<br>Drug doses<br>AMH (you can get it on your phone, only bring if you already have a copy don't buy especially.)<br>Therapeutic Guidelines- Antibiotics<br>A novel or two |
| <b>Patrol Gear</b> | Water bottle, or if you own one a camel-bak(don't buy especially)<br>Summer sleeping bag<br>Raincoat<br>Head Torch (yes I mentioned it twice because it is that handy.)<br>If you have one a rollup sleeping mat<br>Hand disinfectant<br>20 Kina as a thank you to your host   |

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|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Stationary</b>           | Pens<br>Pocket notebook<br>A4/A5 notebook   |
| <b>Shoes</b>                | Thongs<br>A pair of shoes that you can easily slip on (you need to take off your shoes every time you enter a room)<br>Sneakers/hiking boots. Expensive hiking boots won't help with the mud so if you want to get hiking boots just buy a budget pair. |
| <b>Swim wear</b>            | Guys you can wear your board shorts. Girls need to wear full clothing to go swimming so not much point bringing bathers.  |
| <b>Bedding</b>              | Towels and bedding are supplied in the student house.   |
| <b>Electrical Equipment</b> | Laptop/tablet<br>Phone<br>Camera<br>USB   |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>        | Umbrella<br>Sunscreen with added insect repellent<br>A hat  |

## Communication and Electrical Equipment

PNG uses standard Australian power plugs so you will not require any adaptors for electrical equipment. The generator at Kompam is on between 6.30pm -10pm. Solar power is available outside of these hours. It is best to charge your electrical equipment during the generator hours.

Most of PNG has mobile reception/internet provided by Digicel. If you get your phone unlocked in Australia you can buy a Digicel SIM card at the international airport terminal and some prepaid cards. If your phone is locked you can buy a cheap phone for 49Kina. How much credit you need depends on if you want to phone home or just write the occasional text. I got one 50kina card and 2 3kina cards just in case of emergencies.

If you are used to a smart phone it's probably best to stick with your smart phone. Trying to convert back to a button phone is harder than you think. You suddenly realize that you use your phone for email, calendar, medscape, as a camera for medical photos and a torch and it's very hard to live without it. If you bring your phone you can load a lot of information before you arrive such as Medscape offline, Evernote offline (need premium account for this) and the Australian Medicines Handbook.

Kompam now has Wi-Fi that is on between around 11am to 10pm each day. It is fast enough to check your email, Facebook and look up any medical conditions you have encountered in the day but it's not fast enough to download you-tube videos or to have web-cam chats.

There is no internet while staying in Mount Hagen.

There are no public computers in Kompam so bring your own laptop or iPad to take advantage of the Wi-Fi.

In terms of communicating back home your best options are Skype and Viber. Viber requires you to have a smart phone even though you can use it on the computer but has the advantage of being able to contact others with Viber via a phone. This way you don't have to wait for someone to hop online like you have to with Skype.

There is no TV reception available at Kompam so you may want to bring some legally downloaded movies on a USB or external hard drive for some entertainment.

## **Vaccinations and medications**

Being a medical student most of your vaccinations should be up to date. You want to ensure you are covered for tetanus, typhoid and hepatitis A and B.

There is an oral cholera vaccination available that supposedly covers for traveler's diarrhoea. There was a cholera outbreak in PNG a few years back but there was no mention of cholera during my stay. So it is up to you if you want this vaccination.

My doctor recommended getting rabies vaccination. Rabies doesn't appear to be common in PNG but if in the odd chance you do get bitten and you need the vaccination you will need to be air lifted out. So it may be best to get it before hand. (Dr Mills addition – I have never seen or heard of cases of this in these parts so wouldn't recommend. Up to you)

Japanese encephalitis is an expensive vaccination and no one can really provide much information about whether to get it for Kompam. It's apparently more common in rainy season.

You will see patients with TB but I haven't heard of any medical students getting a BCG vaccination.

Anti-malaria treatment is your choice in Kompam. Kompam is not a malaria region due to the altitude but there are many aid posts around Kompam that are malaria regions. Malarone is very expensive and will cost roughly \$300 for a 6week rotation. Doxycycline is a cheaper option but keep in mind side effects of sun sensitivity and for girls thrush can be a problem. Mefloquine weekly is the other option.

The hospital does have medications but it is best if you bring medications for yourself so you don't use the hospital precious supply. Some GP practices have a traveler's pack which can be quite handy to purchase.

## **Donations**

If you would like to bring something to help the hospital discuss with Dr. Mills a few months before you leave.

A few items that are usually required are:

- Bandages
- 3.0 cutting monofilament suture

- 3.0 taper prolene suture for tendon repairs.

## Medical conditions to familiarize yourself with before you arrive

- Malaria
- TB
- HIV
- Typhoid
- Pig Bell
- Right sided heart failure
- Burns
- Tendon Injuries or the hands and feet
- Eye injuries
- Neonatal sepsis
- Post partum hemorrhage
- Antenatal PV bleeding
- Septic abortion



## Common medications in Kompam

- Ketamine with atropine
- Chloramphenicol
- Albendazole
- Tinidazole
- Fansidar
- Artemether