

Papua New Guinea

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Papua New Guinea is a developing nation classified as lower middle income. Located between the Coral Sea and the South Pacific Ocean, the climate classifications range from humid equatorial (no dry season) in the north to humid equatorial (long dry season) in the south, with cooler temperatures in some high-altitude areas.

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

Although yellow fever does not occur in Papua New Guinea, an official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary.

- *Requirement:* A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 1 year coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. This also applies to all airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) in risk countries.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against chikungunya, COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, Japanese encephalitis, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—*International Travel and Health* (current online update, Country List)

(2019) Malaria risk due predominantly to *P. falciparum* exists throughout the year in the entire country below 1800 m. *P. vivax* resistance to chloroquine has been reported.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications) ^a

^aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand-by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—*Health Information for International Travel* (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: Present throughout the country at altitudes < 2,000 m (6,562 ft).

- Drug resistance³: Chloroquine (both *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*).
- Malaria species: *P. falciparum* 65%–80%, *P. vivax* 10%–30%, *P. malariae* and *P. ovale* rare.

- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine.⁴

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

High risk exists throughout the country, including in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures are generally inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent seafood poisoning may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Barmah Forest fever, dengue, scrub typhus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include anthrax disease, helminths, hepatitis C, leptospirosis, marine hazards, melioidosis, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites, tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Consular Travel Advice

Due to crime, civil unrest, and the risk of interethnic violence, consular sources recommend reconsidering travel (or avoiding nonessential travel) to the entire country, especially Mount Hagen and Enga, Hela, and Southern Highlands provinces. Due to civil unrest, consular sources recommend avoiding travel to Central Bougainville District, particularly areas near the Panguna mine, and to Highlands Region (other than Goroka).

A daily curfew is in effect from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. in Enga Province, in response to civil unrest and interethnic violence.

Terrorism Risk

No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

Crime

High risk of violent crime (armed robbery, home invasion, sexual assault, carjacking, and assault) exists throughout the country, especially in areas frequented by tourists; in isolated hiking areas; in Port Moresby (Parliament House area), Madang (Madang Province), and Lae (Morobe Province), including along the highway between Lae and Lae Nadzab Airport and the Highland Highway (particularly between the towns of Goroka and Kainantu); in the tourist resorts surrounding Milne Bay.

High risk of petty crime exists in cities, especially in Port Moresby, Lae (Morobe Province), and Mount Hagen (Western Highlands Province).

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations occur throughout the country and are generally peaceful but have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

Ethnic tensions are present in Port Moresby and the provinces of Enga, Hela, and Western Highlands. Landmines and other unexploded ordnance may be present along the Kokoda Track and in Milne Bay and the town of Rabaul.

Water Safety

Passenger boats may be unsafe, including ferries and small crafts traveling between islands. Decline water transportation in vessels that appear overloaded or lack personal flotation devices or life jackets.

Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Transportation Safety

High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is less than 10 in most high-income countries.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

There are no restrictions on mobile phone usage while driving.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Natural Disasters

The rainy season is from December through March, coinciding with the typhoon season. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic and volcanic activity frequently occurs, especially in East New Britain Province, West New Britain Province, and on Manam Island in Madang Province.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Papua New Guinea

- United States: [+675] 321-1455; pg.usembassy.gov
- Canada: Canada does not have an embassy or consulate in Papua New Guinea.
- United Kingdom: [+675] 303-7600; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-high-commission-port-moresby
- Australia: [+675] 325-9333; www.png.embassy.gov.au

Papua New Guinea's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: www.pngembassy.org
- In Canada: [+1] 403-807-7375
- In the U.K.: www.pnghighcomm.org.uk
- In Australia: www.pngcanberra.org

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV testing is required to obtain a work or residence visa.