

## KOKODA SPIRIT FITNESS ADVENTURE



The Kokoda is arguably the most well known link Australians have to World War II. In July 1942 Australia had just two Militia brigades in Port Moresby, the administrative centre of Papua. In that month the Japanese landed troops at Buna and Gona on the Papuan north coast and in the following month they landed another force at Milne Bay.

The barrier between the Japanese forces in the north and Port Moresby on the south coast was the Owen Stanley Range - a steep, rugged series of mountains crossed only by a few foot tracks, the most important of which was the Kokoda. At the end of June, one thousand Militiamen, 'Maroubra' force, had been ordered to hold Kokoda and its airfield against any possible Japanese attack - but this proved an impossible task.

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By mid-September the Australians had dug in at Imita Ridge, fifty kilometres from Port Moresby, and were ordered to hold that position. A fight to the death was expected but the Japanese, lacking sufficient supplies and fearing an American attack on their base at Buna, began to withdraw.

During November the Australians were pursuing the Japanese through the stinking mud and treacherous, slippery tracks as they went back along the Kokoda. The Japanese advance through the rain-sodden jungles of Papua had been turned into a retreat but, even though many of them were sick and starving, it was always a fighting retreat. Most of the hardest fighting was around Buna and Gona where they had determined to fight to the death to maintain a foothold in Papua.

The Australian advance was aided by the American 32nd Division which established bases to the south of Buna while the Australians pushed on down the Kokoda and across country from Wanigela. Gona was taken on 9 December and on 2 January 1943 Buna was captured. Sanananda, held by 600 Japanese, was not taken until 12 January. The Papuan campaign ended with the surrender of Japanese survivors on 22 January.

**Out of a force of about 20,000 the Japanese had lost 13,000, most of whom had fought to the death rather than surrender. The campaign cost Australia over 6000 casualties. Tropical diseases, as much as the fighting, had taken their toll on both armies.**

For many Australians the Kokoda is on their bucket list to be ticked off. To help you tick this great fitness adventure off your list and learn about some great Australian history the Valetudo Health Team are training up a group to take on the 96km's of trail in 8 nights and 9 days. You will be required to walk ~8-10 hours per day carrying packs ranging from ~12-17kg's (depending if you get a porter then it is approximately ~8kg). The 8 night option isn't the quickest option but is still a physically demanding challenge and allows us to interact with the villages and have down time i.e. swim in the rivers.



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Arrival Day - Fly from Brisbane to Port Moresby and overnight at the Gateway Hotel

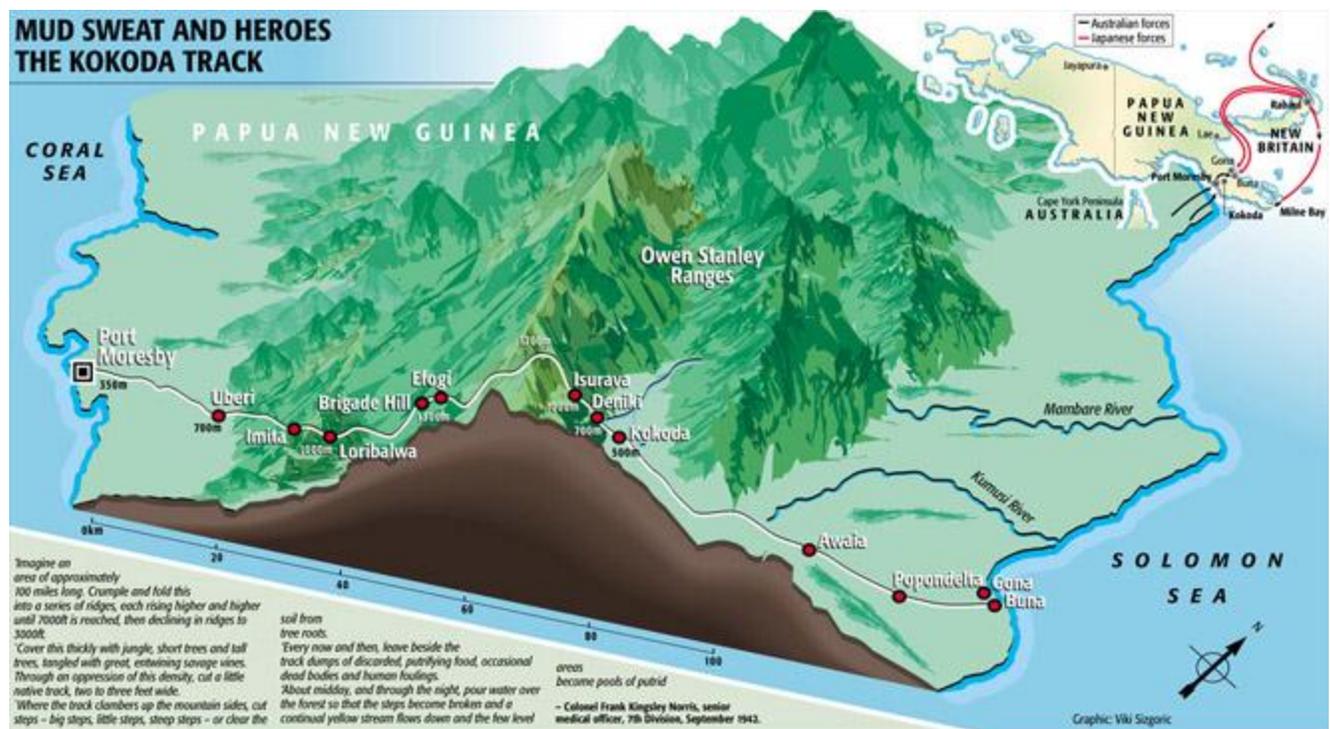
Day 1 - Depart Gateway Hotel, visit to Bomana War Cemetery to pay our respects. Transport from Bomana War Cemetery to Owers' Corner and commence trek

Day 1 – Day 8 is trekking in the direction of Owers' Corner to Kokoda. Our trek will finish at Kokoda

Day 8 - Overnight in Kokoda

Day 9 - Depart Kokoda by Charter for Port Moresby and overnight at Gateway Hotel

The following day, the group will depart Port Moresby for Brisbane.



The selected dates for the trip are: Depart Perth on Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> of August (depending on flights) and start trekking on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September finishing on Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. Flights from

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Brisbane to Port Moresby cost about \$500. You also need to source domestic flights. A travel agent Kokoda Spirit use can assist with flight bookings and travel insurance.

Valetudo Health has chosen Kokoda Spirit ([www.kokodaspirit.com.au](http://www.kokodaspirit.com.au)) to lead the way. Kokoda Spirit have a great reputation and were selected to aid defence force groups, assist with the Kokoda film logistics and were the team that guided Australia's Para Olympian Kurt Fearnley across the trail, as he amazingly crawled the whole way!



The fitness challenge doubles as a fundraiser for the Legacy foundation ([www.legacy.com.au](http://www.legacy.com.au)), the charity provides services to Australian families suffering financially and socially after the incapacitation or death of a spouse or parent, during or after their defence force service. Legacy currently cares for 100,000 widows and 1,900 children and disabled dependents throughout Australia. Each person that aspires to be a part of the Valetudo Health Team that takes on the fitness adventure with Kokoda Spirit needs to raise at least \$500 for Legacy. Feel free to raise as much as you like and even suggest fundraising ideas/events! We would just like to give back to those that gave for us.

Fundraising page: [www.everydayhero.com.au/valetudohealth](http://www.everydayhero.com.au/valetudohealth)

The Kokoda Spirit package costs **\$2,655**, which is quite price competitive. Please note that this does not include flights to Papua New Guniea, some trekking equipment will need to be purchased and you will need to consult your doctor about necessary vaccinations which can add up.

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An extra \$700 is required if you would like a porter to carry your bag, but hopefully we will get you fit enough to take on the challenge yourself.

We will be using local guides as an Australian guide is an extra \$605 each. If all of the group would like an Australian guide we will consider upgrading. Another reason for only having a local guide is because we only need 5 people to make the fitness adventure happen where we need at least 12 for an Australian led trek.

The 16 possible positions on the Valetudo Health Team for this Fitness Adventure with Kokoda Spirit are prioritised to Valetudo Health clients and staff. If we struggle to get the necessary numbers Kokoda Spirit will open the option to the general public.

A \$500 deposit is required and you can organise a long term payment system with Kokoda Spirit so you can incorporate the trip into your monthly budget. The total balance is required to be paid eight weeks prior to the event.

Please contact Shane Johnstone on 0428 122 378 or by email: [shane@valetudohealth.com.au](mailto:shane@valetudohealth.com.au) if you are interested in joining the team.

Looking forward to an adventure we won't forget!

**Kokoda Spirit:** (07) 5445 2758



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