



“IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HEROES”

KOKODA

Spirit

KOKODA SPIRIT PTY LTD
“In the footsteps of heroes”

Introduction

Kokoda Spirit is Australia and PNG’s most respected and professional company trekking the Kokoda Track. The Kokoda Track is one of the World’s great adventures. Kokoda is a living breathing, pulsating and evolving Track. It is surrounded by seemingly impenetrable jungle, pristine rivers and stunning waterfalls that cut deep into the brooding mist covered mountains then sweep down into beautiful, lush green mystical valleys.

Kokoda Spirit is a specialised Australian adventure trekking company taking school groups, sporting teams, corporate groups and individuals across the famous and iconic Kokoda Track.

Trekking Kokoda with Kokoda Spirit is an experience not just a holiday; we trek with the perspective and knowledge of a historian and the passion and excitement of an explorer on a monumental adventure! We trek Kokoda, as it should be, with respect to those that fought on it, and with respect to the customs and beliefs of the landowners, villagers and people of PNG.

History

Kokoda Spirit was formed by husband and wife team Wayne and Michelle Wetherall in 2004. Wayne had recently returned from trips to both Vietnam and PNG including the famous and enormously challenging Kokoda Track. These two trips were the impetus for the birth of Kokoda Spirit. Wayne and Michelle had a dream to share the story of the courageous and heroic diggers on the Kokoda Track with fellow Australians.

Kokoda Spirit is Passionate and Committed to the legacy and Spirit that our Australian Soldiers and their Papuan New Guinea Brothers have left for us on the Kokoda Track.

The Story of the Australian Diggers and their Papuan New Guinea Brothers on the Kokoda Track has become folklore, an Australian Legend.

The Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice shown by our boys have made them and the Kokoda Track an Australian Icon.

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 2/14th Battalion, Cecil Driscoll, Alan “Kanga” Moore, Ted Stuart and the son of Captain Sam Templeton, Reg Templeton from the 39th Battalion and Keith Norrish, Bill Graydon, Jim Mackenzie, Jim Moir and Pel Williams of the 2/16th Battalion. Wayne has also been invited to speak in front of the Kokoda Veterans at their annual association dinners.

He has also made three trips to Japan to interview Japanese Veterans and meet with the 15th Independent Engineers association and representatives of the 144th Regiment association and to research their Regimental history on the track. He has also interviewed Kokichi Nishimura “The Bone Man of Kokoda” on three occasions, and Major Horie, Staff Officer 18th Imperial Japanese Army on two occasions.

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 Pependetta.

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 39th 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 39th 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.

The 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.

Kokoda Spirit and Wayne Wetherall are always at the forefront of new adventures in PNG.

In 2008 we uncovered the remains of four full Japanese Skeletons on the Kokoda Track and worked closely with the Japanese Government on their repatriation back to Japan in 2009.

Our Staff

Wayne and Michelle Wetherall runs our Australian office and operation along with **Helen Adams**.

Wayne, Michelle and the Kokoda Spirit team is passionate about the Kokoda Track, the Australian history, the people and the culture of the people along the track.

Kokoda Spirit has offices in both Queensland and Port Moresby. This allows us to provide you with local contacts in Australia, while our strategically based Port Moresby office provides all the advantages of local knowledge and local infrastructure. This support network ensures your trekking adventure is enjoyable and trouble free.

Michelle Wetherall is the boss of Kokoda Spirit, her enthusiasm; organisation and administration skills ensure that all facets of the business run smoothly and that clients are kept up to date with the latest information. She has a wealth of knowledge about the Kokoda Track and travels frequently to PNG. Michelle is the coordinator between the operations and administration ensuring that all goes well for the trek.

Helen Adams is the wife of our Australian Guide Brad, so has heard plenty of stories from the track over the years. Helen takes care of customer enquiries, bookings and administration requirements.

Both Michelle and Helen can assist with your trekking and adventure needs.

Wayne Wetherall has accompanied his Trek Masters and Land Owners on the Kokoda Track and the exploration of the PNG rivers.

They have established strong bonds with the local villagers, setting up trusts to supply much needed supplies of Schoolbooks and equipment. His latest project is *Village Spirit*, *Village Reader* and *Village Gardener*, ensuring that the local communities can continue to grow and develop.

Wayne's expertise in Business, IT and Tourism provides the professional support and infrastructure to the team in Papua New Guinea. Wayne has been exploring PNG since 2004 and has been instrumental in some of the great discoveries along the track. Wayne has an intimate knowledge and passion for the Australian war history on the track and is our Chief Australian Guide. He has also written a number of stories on the history and his experiences on the track. His enthusiasm and knowledge will give you an insight into the Kokoda Tracks' history.

Wayne has successfully led exploration treks and tours into Vietnam, Thailand, Borneo China, Germany, Italy and France. Wayne has assisted in opening up the Sandakan track for Tourism in Borneo and Long Tan in Vietnam. Wayne has also successfully climbed Mt Wilhelm in PNG and Mt Kinabalu in Borneo three times including the World's highest "Via Ferrata".

Early 2009, Wayne trained 4 new passionate and knowledgeable Australian guides to meet the increased demands for adventure trekking. They are **Brad Adams**, **Dion Taylor**, **Max Bernstone** and **Brian Healey**; these guys are passionate about the track and will ensure you have a great trip.

Adrian Koi is also one of the leading Trek Masters along the track. Adrian was also the chief trek leader for **Peter Brune** who is the Author of "**A Bastard of A Place**" and "**Those Ragged Bloody Heroes**" Adrian like all our Trek Masters is first aid trained and has successfully crossed the track 125 times. Our 9 other senior Trek Masters include; Gideon Malawi, Alan Malawi, Frank Bogajaiwa, Sai Abel, Joshua Segi, Noel, Jeffrey and Fred and David have over 780 successful treks across the track between them.

Joyce Kamburi, is our PNG Operations Manager and has trained and worked in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in PNG for over 15 years. Joyce ensures all our logistics and organisational plans run smoothly. Joyce has a warm friendly personality and will ensure your stay in PNG is enjoyable.

Our Treks

We have also taken on a partnership role in the Kokoda Challenge Youth Program (KCYP) in Brisbane. The KCYP is a program which has been developed to help young Australians who are at a crossroad in their lives and require an opportunity to reach their full potential. Kokoda Spirit will be again taking 44 young Australian Leaders across the track this year as part of the program. Kokoda Spirit is also working with MASP Youth Leadership Mentoring program, Jobs Australia with their Indigenous programs and Queensland Police.

Kokoda Spirit was also the **chosen trekking company** by the Producers of "**Kokoda**" the Movie. Kokoda Spirit has also worked and trekked closely with Paralympian and Adventurer Michael Milton, Paralympian Kurt Fearnley (Crawling Kokoda), Rugby League Legend, Paul "The Chief" Harragon from Channel Nine Footy show, Kokoda Chicks, Breast Cancer Foundation, Heart Foundation, Coca Cola, Zing, Victorian RSL, VECCI, , Australian Defence Force, Australia's Federation Guard, Australian Federal Police, Queensland Police, Kokoda Challenge Youth Program, MASP Youth Leadership Mentoring Program, Jobs Australia Indigenous program, Centre Stage Management, Qantas, 500 Club, EFM, Haileybury College, St Ignatius College, Hale School, Yarrowonga Secondary College, Mackillop College, Sunshine Coast Grammar and Chancellor Park State College, Channel Seven Sunday Night Program, Channel 7 Today Tonight program, ABC Foreign Correspondent, articles in The Australian, Age, Courier Mail, Japan Times newspapers and In-flight Magazine, plus a host of other Corporate and individual clients.

We have also organised treks to Mt Wilhelm and Mt Victoria. We also offer trips to Milne bay, Buna and Gona on the North Coast, Lark Force Trek in Rabaul, the Bulldog Track and the Black Cat track which Wayne and the Kokoda Spirit team have developed along with the traditional landowners.

We at **Kokoda Spirit** are dedicated to providing our trekkers with the **Experience of a lifetime**, to **Experience Adventure** to **Experience the Spirit** and to **Experience the Culture** and the **People** this wonderful, fascinating and awe inspiring Country provides. We are truly walking in the footsteps of heroes and in the footsteps of our brothers. Every year Kokoda Spirit organises many expeditions for groups or individuals across the Kokoda Track.

Whether the trip is to fulfill educational goals or for personal development, it is always more than just a holiday.

Our Kokoda Track trips offer an innovative and safe educational travel experience, focusing on interaction with the local communities and developing a greater understanding of the diverse and rich cultural heritage of PNG.

Our trips also focus on our Australian heritage and characteristics and the values that make Australia and Australians unique and one of the most advanced Nations in the World.

Our educational journeys help our trekkers develop a sense of worth and self esteem, along with concepts of teamwork, leadership, motivation, goal setting, and discipline and peak performance and shared responsibility - in addition to simply having fun!

We also provide a comprehensive coverage of the battles that took place on the Kokoda Track, the circumstances that led to the battles and the subsequent success of our tactics and strategies. If you want to understand the battles along the Kokoda Track, challenge yourself physically and mentally over the tough terrain, appreciate the rainforest at first hand, or immerse yourself in the culture of the local communities, then Kokoda Spirit has created an innovative and safe itinerary with experiences that you just can't get on a regular adventure.

The crossing of the Kokoda Track is an enormous achievement to have conquered one of the World's great walks is an amazing feeling and a sense of great pride. Each person will experience emotions, feelings and have different experiences but the story of the battles and its heroes along the Kokoda Track is an Australian legend.

Safety

We are focused on safety with our head guides trained and qualified in remote first aid and ever watchful to reduce any potential hazards along the way. We carry the latest in satellite phones which are regularly monitored to ensure your safety. Kokoda Spirit also has a comprehensive operation manual and risk assessment plan and policy. We also carry \$10 million in Public Liability insurance, to ensure that you are protected on the track.

Our PNG National led treks with mixed group sizes are restricted to a maximum of 16 persons. Our Australian led treks have a maximum 20 trekkers our average is 16. This number allows you to have more space on the track and plenty of space in our campsites and villagers. Smaller groups are more intimate and personal and also allow you the opportunity to learn from your guides, about the history, the sites and the culture of the people, without competing with mass numbers of trekkers.

Food

Our food is always fresh, we do not use ration packs and our meals are supplemented by local village crops and fruit. Our menus are very healthy and balanced to ensure our clients are always at their best. We can cater for gluten free and vegetarian diets upon request.

Giving Back

Wayne was recently invited to participate in an Australian/ PNG Government workshop on the sustainability and eco tourism plan for the Kokoda Track. Wayne is now working with the Kokoda Track Authority (KTA) as part of the KTA Works Program Advisory Committee. This committee has been formed to protect and plan for the long term protection of the track, and to ensure all the Landowners and Villages benefit from the Track.

Responsible Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy

Travel brings benefits both to the traveller and the countries visited-offering opportunities to learn about different cultures creating jobs and contributing to economic development.

However, tourism has its negative impact too- it can erode cultures, alter the natural environment and quickly lead to the exploitation of local communities.

Kokoda Spirit believes passionately in responsible travel and has promoted it right from the start. Kokoda Spirit is committed to the development of sustainable eco-trekking along the Kokoda Track. This commitment will enable us to assist the local Koiari and Orokaiva people develop skills and experience to gain employment and develop eco-tourism business across the Kokoda Track. We are also committed to developing and implementing health and education programs to assist the people across the track.

We believe people who work for Kokoda Spirit should be treated fairly, paid a fair wage, are supplied with adequate trekking gear, have a safe work environment, have access to health and education programs and further career opportunities.

We also believe that we should also learn and respect the culture and the customs of the country we are visiting so that we do not offend local people.

We ensure that local people benefit economically from trekking by employing them as porters, cooks, leaders and guides.

We also train our staff in hospitality, customer service, and first aid and assist them with both education and health.

Kokoda Spirit runs community programs across the track to help with the distribution of school books, reading programs, gardening programs and first aid kits.

We have also trained some of the local villagers to bake bread, scones etc and encouraged the locals to introduce a laundry service for the trekkers to further improve their income. We are also working with the local landowners to prepare local meals and brew local coffee for the trekkers for market value pricing.

We also contribute to the clean up the Kokoda Track campaign and educate Landowners to the best locations of guest houses and latrines.

We also purchase our food locally and eat locally in village and family run guest houses ensuring that the locals benefit economically.

We also minimise our impact on the environment by travelling in small groups and reducing waste.

Go with a Local

Trekking Kokoda is all about getting to the heart and soul of the Kokoda Track and discovering what really makes it tick. Not only is 'going local' the best way for you to have a real travel experience, but working with the local people and their businesses means that the economic benefit derived from your trek stays with the local community.

One of the main reasons many travellers choose Kokoda Spirit is the fact we exclusively use tour leaders who were born or raised along the Kokoda Track.

Their local knowledge keeps them one step ahead of the non local guides.

They are highly qualified and trained and English speaking, and their intimate knowledge of the Kokoda Track enables them to unlock doors and show you things that you wouldn't otherwise find.

Travelling with a local leader means that you enjoy a uniquely local perspective, meeting your leader's friends and family along the track.

Aside from the benefit to you, the traveller, we are proud to say that by employing locals, we are providing income, training and a career to local people.

A lot of trekking companies talk about responsible travel but employ 'outsiders'. This deprives locals of the economic benefits of tourism.

With Kokoda Spirit, you can trek knowing that the money you spend directly benefits your leader, the porters and their families and the local community. In as many ways as we can, we support local businesses and communities in our travels, it's the ethical way. It is the only way to get a true understanding of PNG and the Kokoda Track.

We know at Kokoda Spirit that we are far from perfect, but we are trying very hard to minimise our impact on the Kokoda Track, while delivering an exceptional eco-trekking experience. We will continue to work with the local people in PNG and along the Kokoda Track to ensure everyone benefits from this rich and rewarding experience that is the Kokoda Track.

Wayne and Michelle Wetherall

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