



**Fire Dancers' Initiation Ceremony**  
*Masks and Death Rites of the Bismark Sea*  
**Gone With The Wynd Expedition # 5**

The Last Tuesday Society

&

The Viktor Wynd Museum of Curiosities, Fine Art & Natural History

**Invite You...**

**On a Collecting Expedition to New Britain, Duke of York Isles and New Ireland  
To Witness Three Spectacular Tribal Ceremonies,  
Climb An Active Volcano, Meet Megapode Egg Hunters  
And Snorkel on Some of the World's Most Pristine Coral Reefs and Swim with Dolphins**



# Fire Dancers' Initiation Ceremony

## *Masks and Death Rites of the Bismarck Sea*

### Papua New Guinea

This expedition takes you to three of Papua New Guinea's most interesting islands to witness three dramatic tribal ceremonies; the Baining Fire Dancers initiation ceremony on New Britain Island, a Tabuan dance with Duk Duk spirits on the Duke of York Isles and a Malagan mask ceremony on New Ireland.

All three ceremonies are spectacular and very different from one another, but the elaborate and sacred initiation ceremony of the young men of the Baining tribe of New Britain as Fire Dancers (see summary overleaf), and their performances jumping through fire and clouds of embers in bark-cloth Kavat masks, is sight that very few, if any, outsiders have been allowed to witness - on our visit in 2019, the village Chief invited us to come back in 2020 to help celebrate his son's three day initiation ceremony.

This incredibly rich itinerary takes in bird watching, orchids, relaxing on pristine beaches, climbing a steaming active volcano, visiting jungle waterfalls, joining megapode egg hunters, exploring many World War II relics and countless opportunities for purchasing artefacts, carvings and traditional shell money (tambu)!

Throughout this trip, there will be many opportunities to snorkel or dive in the coral triangle on some of the worlds richest reefs in The Bismarck & Soloman Seas (we recommend that you bring your own snorkel, mask and flippers!). Diving trips at extra cost paid directly to operators.

**COST:** US \$3,950 per person.

**START POINT:** Rabaul, Papua New Guinea.

**END POINT:** Rabaul, Papua New Guinea.

**DATES:** Monday November 2nd to Friday November 13th, 2020 (note this expedition is deliberately planned to start on a Monday and finish on a Friday, allowing you to travel to/from PNG over weekends. Only 10 work days are required to take part on this trip!)

**GROUP SIZE:** 6-12.

Email [expeditions@thelasttuesdaysociety.org](mailto:expeditions@thelasttuesdaysociety.org) for more information and to make bookings.

**Optional pre- expedition extensions:** we will start and finish this trip with accommodation at the luxurious Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort on New Britain. There are countless excellent dive and snorkelling sites for coral reefs, WW2 wrecks, night dives and even dugongs near to the resort. If you wish to relax before or after this trip (or do a Padi diving course), a convenient option is to spend a few extra days at the Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort. We can introduce you to the management team to negotiate special rates and package options.





**FIRE DANCE INITIATION CEREMONY (NEW BRITAIN):** while many visitors briefly visit the villages of the Baining fire-dancers and watch their famous tradition of jumping through flames, very few outsiders have ever witnessed an initiation ceremony.

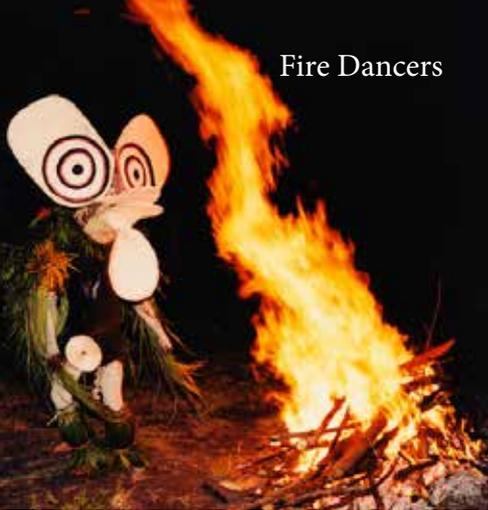
During a 2019 *Gone With The Wynd Expedition*, the village Chief of the fire dancers invited us to return in 2020 to witness and take part in a Fire Dance Initiation Ceremony involving his son and many other young men from his village and villages nearby. During this ceremony, dozens of fire dancers congregate in the Gaulib Valley from neighbouring villages to initiate new young dancers into the secrets of fire dancing. Day dances, night dances, and a massive community feast begins several evenings of spectacular fire dances!

During the night dances, several sacred, spiritual characters are invoked and it is believed that each dancers become part-spirit and part-human for the duration of the ceremony. To the sound of bamboo drums and tribal chanting, dramatic Kavat dancers wearing enormous and spectacular bark masks and bodies adorned with leaves, jump through the flames kicking up clouds of embers and continue long into the night! The Kavat masks represent the Spirits of the forest, the dances refer to male activities such as hunting, warfare, chopping trees etc.

The culmination of the three day initiation ceremony will be a dance that will last from 6pm – 6am. A male orchestra/choir will sing and drum rhythmically all night, as the mask-wearing dancers approach one by one, appearing from their secret places in the forest. As the night progresses they will dance more and more wildly, some of them breaking off from the group to dance, in the middle of the enormous fire, protected from burning by spirits of the snakes who have entered them.

At certain points villagers (and indeed ourselves) will be invited to join in the dance (though at our last visit the elders seemed to disapprove of some of the licentious dancing of their younger family members). The dance represents a battle between the wild Spirits of the forest and the inhabitants of the village, who at dawn should win the battle, chasing the Spirits (in their masks) back into the forest.





Fire Dancers



Tubuan



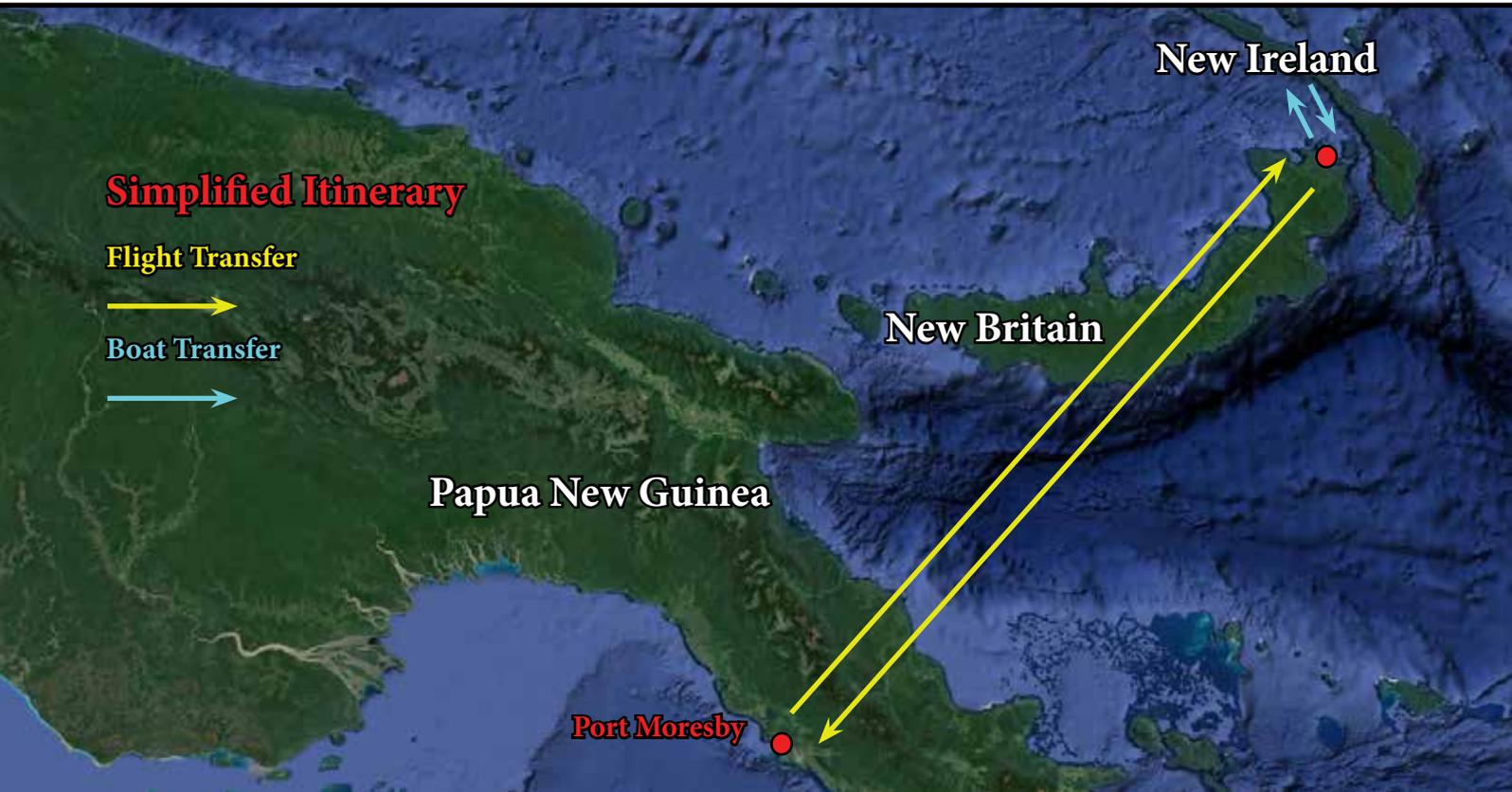
Malagan

During the day, the villagers will show us secret places where the kavat masks are made, communes with snakes and spirits which the dancers believe allow them to dance through the fire (immune to flames and embers), (optional) shopping for several pigs in preparation for a mumu feast, and daytime singing and dancing in unique day masks. The day dances should involve women, both with the music and the masks and be connected to the Spirits who are involved with women's work such as gardening. We may not be allowed to photograph many of the more sacred aspects of the ceremonies (such as visits to the sacred "secret places" in the forest.

**TUBUAN CEREMONY (DUKE OF YORK ISLANDS):** The *Duk Duk* are a secret society of initiates under the control of certain big men who may use it to bolster their prestige and enforce societal norms. The masks are enormous but unlike most masks only go down just below the waist. The masks are possessed by Spirits, both male and female and appear in the villages seemingly at random, though especially during times of feasting and celebration and are the source of much mirth, chasing sinners and often small children around. Local women and children are forbidden to look at the dancers (although foreign men and women are invited to watch the ceremony).

**MALAGAN CEREMONY (NEW IRELAND):** Following the death of important figures in some traditional New Ireland societies a great celebration is called for to show that the clan has over come the evil/sorcery/magic that has taken one of their members and that they are still rich and powerful. As the society is matrilineal the Malagan is organised by the deceased female relatives. The celebration is extremely expensive and time consuming and can happen many years after the death (or in some cases before the death). The Tatanua masks are some of the most spectacular and beautiful made anywhere in the world, and the ceremony is accompanied with music telling of the trials and tribulations of life, and often of problems with sorcery.

It was traditionally believed that during each Malagan ceremony, the family of the deceased can communicate with their loved ones and become linked to the spirit world. Malagan ceremonies involves other-worldly dancing and singing!

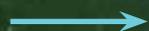


### Simplified Itinerary

Flight Transfer



Boat Transfer



New Ireland

New Britain

Papua New Guinea

Port Moresby

## ITINERARY

**Day 1 (November 2nd):** We meet in the town of Rabaul on New Britain (pick up from airport) and are transferred to the luxurious Kokopo Beach Bungalows Resort where we overnight and have dinner. At 7 pm we have a detailed briefing meeting to discuss the itinerary of our expedition. **Note:** there are multiple flights each day from Port Moresby to/from Rabaul with Air Niugini and PNG Airlines. We will put forward a recommended flight so that expedition members may book onto the same flight to travel together from Port Moresby.

We have the option of booking snorkelling and diving trips for this afternoon at the Kokopo Beach Bungalows Resort (the coral reefs are excellent, and a nearby site has a sunken Japanese WW2 zero fighter plane), or a night dive this evening (often with spectacular bioluminescence).

**Day 2 (November 3rd):** You may choose from two options for today.

**Option 1:** we start at 5 am start to climb Mount Tavurvur, an active volcano which turned the city of Rabaul into the “Pompeii of the Pacific” during a 1994 eruption. An easy, 40 minute climb takes us to the crater where we see steaming sulphur vents at sunrise (incredible views!). We descent the volcano and pass through ash fields strewn with volcanic bombs.

We then visit geothermal hot springs (where locals cook megapode eggs that they collect from the ash fields), and we visit artefact sellers and can purchase Tambu shell money (rings of cowrie shells which the Tolai people still use as currency across New Britain to this day)! We visit the wrecks of two crashed World War 2 planes, the New Britain Club (a fascinating museum filled with WW2 relics and tribal artefacts), Admiral Yamamoto bunker and secret WW2 Japanese barge tunnels. We then visit the Kokopo Museum (with an impressive collection of natural history and cultural artefacts, as well as WW2 vehicles left behind by both sides).

**Option 2:** for a supplement of 750 kina, you can undertake a day of diving with Kokopo Beach Bungalow. This day package includes three dives at reefs, WW2 wreck sites and coral gardens. We reunite in the evening at Kokopo Beach Bungalows Resort for dinner. We have another opportunity to book a night dive for this evening.

Mount Tavurvur (a spectacular climb)



## ITINERARY

**Days 3, 4 and 5 (November 4th, 5th and 6th):** After breakfast, we drive into the spectacular Baining Mountains to the Gaulib Valley for the fire dancers' initiation ceremony. Over these three days, we will witness dozens of fire dancers congregate to perform elaborate initiation rituals in secret ceremonial clearings. During these initiation ceremonies, the young "to-be-initiated" men are told the secrets and magic of becoming Kavat fire dancers.

The ceremony will involve visits to secret places where the kavat masks are made, communes with snakes and spirits which the dancers believe allow them to dance through the fire (immune to flames and embers) and daytime singing and dancing in unique day masks. During the evenings, we watch spectacular dances as newly initiated and experienced men jump through the fires in dramatic masks to the sound of bamboo drums and tribal singing.

During the initiation ceremony, the tribe will prepare a mumu feast (with pork, taro and fern leaves). We can witness the cooking process (heating stones in a fire, building an earth oven, and cooking food in banana leaves), and have the option of joining the tribe in pig shopping.

During down time over days 3, 4 and 5, we can go for walks through the surrounding jungle-clad hills, go bird watching, look for orchids, undertake village visits nearby, swim in a river nearby and interact with the local community!

During the afternoon of day 5, we return to Rabaul, and en-route have a BBQ lunch and (optional) snorkel and swim on shallow (and very beautiful) coral reefs close to a Japanese WW2 submarine base (with tunnels and fortifications which we can explore). Dinner and overnight at Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort.

Accommodation during our stay in the fire dancers' village is a simple guest house in the village with mattresses. **Note:** for anyone who does not wish to sleep in simple conditions in the village during the initiation ceremony, we can organise (at cost price) rooms and transfers to/from Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort each evening and morning.



Baining Fire Dancers (Kavat mask)



## ITINERARY

**Day 6 (November 7th):** We undertake a morning dolphin safari trip from the Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort to see schools of spinner dolphins up close and personal (included in trip price). We then transfer into a “banana boat” and motor to the base of Mount Tavurvur where we observe locals digging in lunar landscape of holes made by megapode birds. The egg hunters show us the secrets of their trade and we can buy some eggs to cook and taste tonight.

We continue to the beautiful Duke of York Islands and check into a basic lodge on Kabakon Island that stands metres away from azure waters and a small coral sand beach. During the afternoon, we observe a fish mumu feast cooked in an earth oven (although very differently to the pork mumu we observed in the Baining Mountains). Towards sunset, we then witness a traditional Tubuan Ceremony (unique to the Duke of York Islands) with dancing Duk Duks (spirits of the forest) and dramatic rhythmic music.

**Day 7 (November 8th):** We have a leisurely start to today (allowing snorkelling in the waters close to our lodge). Anyone interested can join locals on outrigger canoes heading out to go fishing. Around 10 am, we transfer by banana boat to New Ireland. We sleep and dine at a basic but comfortable lodge.



Duk Duks at Tubuan Ceremony

## ITINERARY

**Days 8, 9 and 10 (November 9th, 10th and 11th):** Over these three days, we travel between villages along New Ireland's coast to experience life in Tolai villages, meet artefact traders and carvers, explore pristine beaches and snorkel when possible, New Ireland is extremely traditional, and we glimpse a side of Papua New Guinea little changed by modernity and still dependant largely on fishing for survival. We have the option to join locals on outrigger canoes to go fishing, and our local friends will take us to a pool to hand-feed sacred, tame eels!

The climax of our visit to New Ireland is attending a Malagan Ceremony in which we observe dramatic death rites masks, spectacular dancing and chanting, traditional music and singing. We take part in a feast to try a wide range of local foods.

Each night, we sleep and dine in basic but comfortable accommodation in villages along New Irelands coast. Where possible, we can organise beachside BBQs with fresh fish caught by locals, allowing us to dine on coral sand beaches around bonfires under the stars, listening to the crash of waves along the shore.

**Day 11 (November 12th):** After breakfast, we catch a banana boat back to New Britain. We have the option of visiting a beautiful waterfall, orchid and birding sites, or several viewpoints overlooking the volcanoes close to Rabaul. We have a final chance for booking dive trips (and/or a night dive) at the Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort. We will aim to arrive back at the resort during the afternoon to allow time to pack any artefacts we have purchased, ready to fly home tomorrow. We have a final beach-side BBQ and overnight at the Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort.

**Day 12 (November 13th):** We enjoy a final breakfast together, then transfer to Rabaul airport for departing flights back home!



Masked dancers at Malagan Ceremony

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**The Last Tuesday Society is Delighted to Offer a Small Group The Unique Opportunity to Accompany Viktor Wynd On a Expedition To Find New Wonders For His Museum.**

Following three successful Gone With The Wynd expeditions to Papua New Guinea over 2018 and 2019, we have built an excellent team of expert local guides to organise bespoke trips to the most interesting parts of PNG that few outsiders get the chance to visit.

What Mr.Wynd will find for his museum during this trip he does not know. But since his childhood visits to the old Museum of Mankind on Burlington Gardens he has been fascinated, not to say obsessed by the Malagan Death Rite and longs to bring back a mask, or two.

Participants of this expedition should understand that Papua New Guinea is the land of the unexpected and it is challenging to plan events one day in advance let alone one year in advance so the itinerary may be subject to changes. Things that are promised may not appear – however historically this has worked in our favour when things that were never mentioned or even dreamed of appear as if by, or indeed very probably by magic. As with all our previous expeditions to Papua New Guinea, we will have an incredible adventure!

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This expedition will be organised and run by Redfern Natural History Productions

