



Gonabarabara

Gonabarabara is part of the Bwana-Bwana archipelago about 90 minutes from the capital of Milne Bay Province, Alotau, and approx. 15 minutes from the former centre in Samarai Island. The small size of the island takes nothing from its magical attraction and beautiful surroundings. There are top class coral reefs teeming with life, and the region's greatest attraction, the Manta Ray Cleaning Station. The local Melanesian culture is welcoming and visitors can expect unforgettable hospitality in every community.

However, a visit to this region might be challenging and quite different from many other usual holiday destinations. The information below can assure you that you are starting your journey to Milne Bay and the Bwana-Bwana area with sufficient knowledge about the various aspects of traveling, accommodation and activities.



How to Get There?

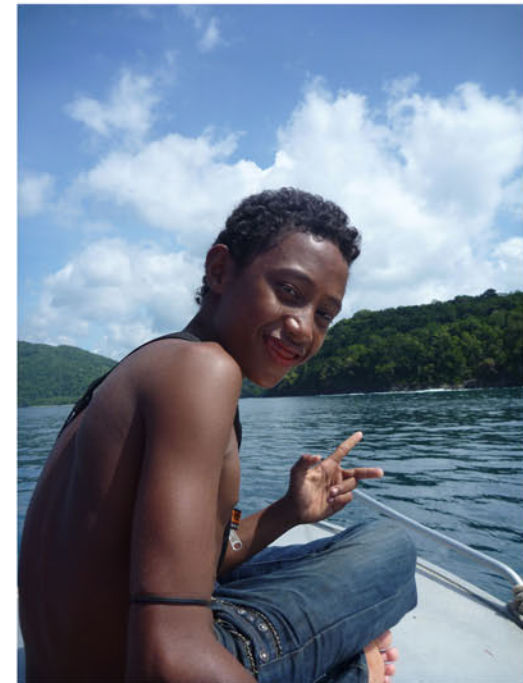
Public dinghies leaving the port of Alotau (in front of TS supermarket) to Samarai regularly between Monday to Friday. The cost is K25 to Samarai or you can pay additional K5 to travel directly to Gonabarabara. On Saturdays the dinghy fare is higher than the weekly rate, and there is no traveling on Sundays except for private dinghies which are quite expensive (about K350).

Prior to your arrival at Alotau, contact Nydia or Nelson (the guesthouses' managers) to arrange your traveling to the Gonabarabara and between the islands. It is also recommended to bring your own petrol with you from Alotau (fuel is also available in Samarai, but is more expensive) to allow yourself freedom and flexibility in your travels. The amount of needed petrol is usually 20L (~K72) or more if you wish to visit further destinations.

Accommodation

The residents of Gonabarabara will warmly welcome you to their community and into their houses. You will be adopted to a family which will look after all your needs. Home stay is offered from K45 per night, and two new guest bungalows are being constructed and expected to be finished by November 2011. Bucket shower and pit toilets are available, as are other necessities such as mats and mosquito nets.

Meals are offered three times a day, but serving times can vary so bring some snacks with you. Prices (as for 2011) are K10 for breakfast, K15 for lunch and K20 for dinner.





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Experiences and Attractions:

A visit to Gonabarabara and the Bwana-Bwana archipelago is extremely different from any other holiday destination and is fascinating as much as it can be physically challenging. The local Melanesian culture, which thrives among the pristine rainforests, is peaceful and welcoming to visitors. You will find that each village has its own form of hospitality and that the locals are extremely kind and polite. There are numerous activities available, so plan your daily schedule to include the ones that suit you. Furthermore, as every activity costs money (anywhere between K10-K100), make sure to enquire ahead about the price. Local people normally feel uncomfortable to inform a visitor of the costs in advance.

The experiences included are:

- Weaving (mats, baskets)
- Fishing (traditional style using canoe, spears etc)
- Story Telling
- Snorkeling & Scuba Diving
- Bushwalking

What to Bring

In addition to insect repellent, first aid and medical kit, don't forget toilet paper, spices (salt, paper), and waterproof bags for all of your gear! Epoxy resin and a small tool kit are also very useful.



Health, safety & cultural tips

These village experiences are authentic and therefore can be a bit challenging for people used to a sedentary lifestyle. Milne Bay Province is safe for tourists due to the mainly matrilineal culture. The culture is very polite to guests and you will be well cared for. However, time frames will be different to what you are used to and the general amenities more sparse. Sundays are a day of rest so travel and activities are restricted.

Remember that your financial contribution will protect biodiversity and support local conservation and local values, but not western style accommodation.

Make sure to ask how much your stay will cost you so that there are no surprises (each activity has a cost). Although prices are standardised, managers feel it is rude to mention money upon your arrival.



Travel combinations with other islands

The Bwana-Bwana islands are relatively close to each other, so travelling between Gonabarabara and the neighboring islands is short and simple. The communities of Doiny, Logea, Kwato and Samarai all offer different experiences of the local culture and the pristine forests and coral reefs. Travel packages are available and recommended during your stay on Gonabarabara.

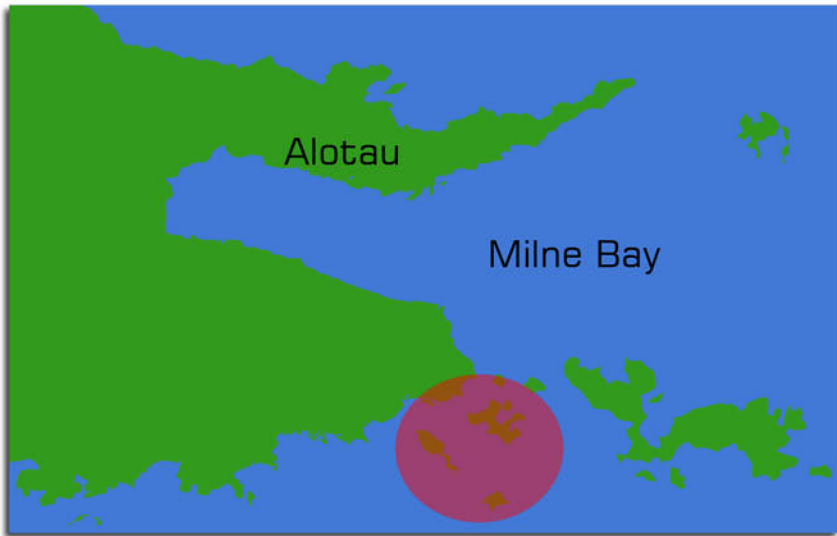


Booking details & contacts

Tauwasse Guest House (manager: Nydia)
Phone: (+675) 73840436

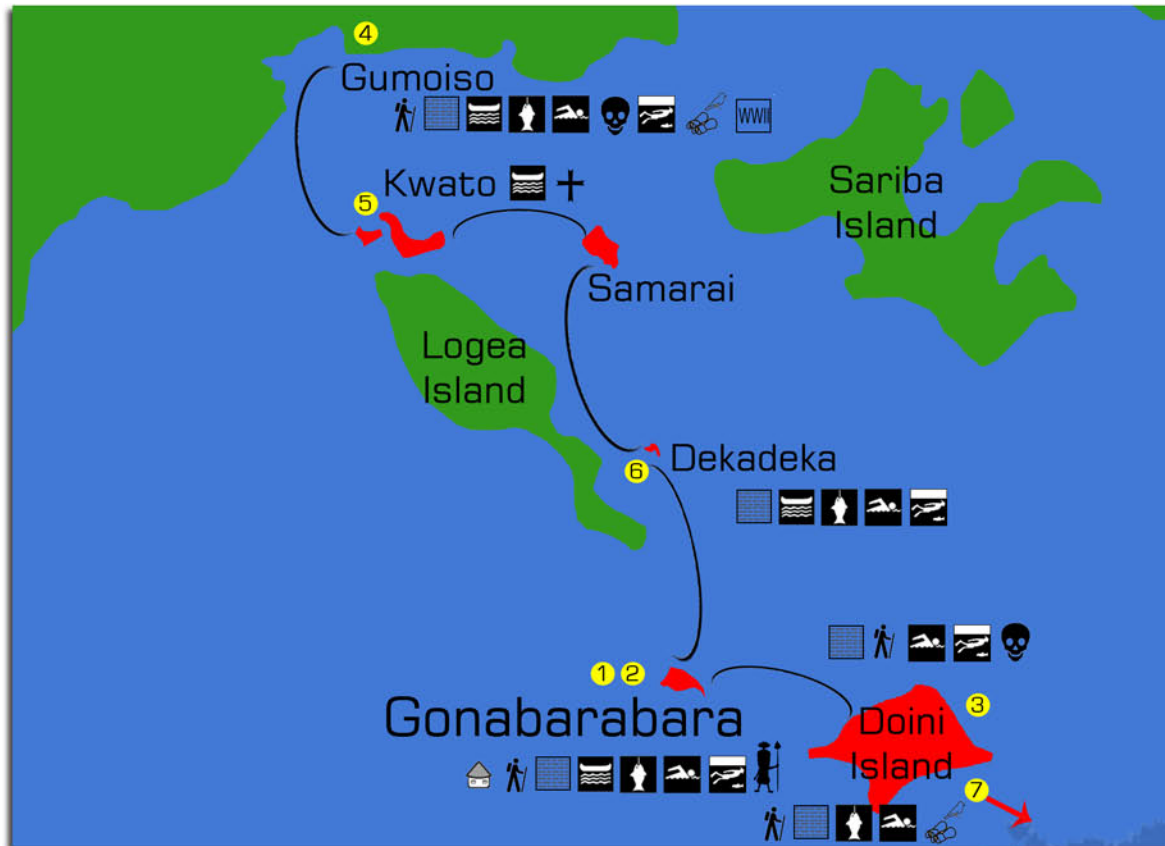
Gonabarabara Guest House (manager: Nelson)
Phone: (+675) 73894544

Napatana Lodge (manager: Gretta Kwasnicka)
www.napatanalodge.com
Phone: (+675) 72915207
Email: info@napatanalodge.com
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Legend

-  Guest House
-  Hiking trail
-  Dinghy trail
-  Reef
-  Canoeing
-  Fishing
-  Swimming
-  Skull cave
-  Snorkeling
-  Bird watching
-  War relic
-  Church
-  Traditional entertainment



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Key attractions:

- 1** Manta Ray Cleaning Station: the main attraction at Gonbalabala. Close to the shore (15-20 m), it is one of only two locations worldwide where manta rays visit to have their parasites removed by cleaning wrasse. These gentle giants (~ 8m wingspan) can be sighted among other amazing marine creatures such as dugongs, parrot fish, and huge clam shells.
- 2** Sniper Lookout & Pinhas Blowhole: 30 to 40 minutes return. Easy to intermediate hike to a hilltop with scenic views of the surrounding islands. Climb down from the lookout to glimpse the local blowhole. From the rocks there are opportunities to spot seabirds and turtles.
- 3** Doini: A 10 minute dinghy ride takes you to an ancestral skull cave, which is believed to be guarded by a white lady. Hike through local gardens and thick rainforest and among bush fowl nests and termite mounds. At this sacred site you can listen to fascinating tales about this forgotten tradition.
- 4** Gumoisu: A 25 minute dinghy ride. Together with a beautiful panorama of the mainland jungle and the Bwana-Bwana islands, Gumoisu offers a range of great activities with local and experienced guides. Hike through the pristine rainforest, view endemic orchid and bird species or dive at a WWII site. Overnight stay is possible at a bush camp and is a great opportunity to observe the nocturnal wildlife.
- 5** Kwato: A 20 minute dinghy ride. The site of a traditionally built church is a tribute to the great legacy of the famous missionary Charles Abel. The climb to the top of a gently sloped hill where the church sits is rewarded by wonderful views of the China straits, especially at dawn and dusk.
- 6** Dekadeka: A 15 minute dinghy ride or paddle on a fishing canoe. This small uninhabited island earned the name 'Picnic Island' due to its white sandy beaches and stunning coral reefs. The water is calm and warm with an abundance of sea snakes and other curious marine animals. Enjoy a break at this lovely location including fishing and cooking PNG's style.
- 7** Domilin: a small island just off Doini and about 10 minute dinghy ride from Gonbalabala. Visit the huge cave famous for its legendary stone figures, enjoy the coolness of the underground springs, and spot several species of native birds including a ground dwelling dove. Traveling to Domilin can be combined with a trip to Koyaleleba and Dabuna, where large colonies of spotted doves and flying foxes reside respectively.