

Freelancer **Jack Goldfarb**, whose byline has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Saturday Review* and many other publications around the globe, tells us something about his recent trip to an offbeat destination — Papua New Guinea.

Suburbia — Papua New Guinea style

My wife and I were dining by candlelight in a swank restaurant where the ambience bore all the hallmarks of sophistication. Romantic Cole Porter melodies rippled from a baby grand piano across the elegantly furnished room. Via our red-cummerbund waiter, we sent our compliments to the Swiss chef for the superb *soupe a l'oignon* served in a pastry shell bowl. Unlikely as it seemed, we were in Port Moresby, capital of Papua New Guinea, a land variously described as “a Stone Age society”, “a gigantic natural history museum”, and “one of the last frontiers on Earth”.

But Papua New Guinea, comprising the eastern half of the world's second largest island (Indonesia's West Irian makes up the other half) and a number of outlying islands, is also a country of remarkable surprises and primitive beauty. An awesome collage of nature, it encompasses peaceful coral atolls, mountain ranges, murky swamps, rain forests, lush upland valleys, and more than a dozen active volcanoes. Today, some six



years after it gained independence, Papua New Guinea is still very much a tribal society in which more than ninety percent of its three million people live in village communities. Rural Papua New Guinea remains unique in that over seven hundred tribal cultures, some of them thousands of years old, have retained their different languages and traditions virtually

unchanged. The survival of these separate cultures can be attributed as much to the fiercely independent nature of the tribespeople as to the geographical isolation forced on them by the island's extraordinary terrain.

Port Moresby, however, with its one hundred twenty thousand inhabitants, is the exception. In the last decade its urbanization has gone into top gear. Highrise buildings, four-lane highways, traffic lights and an international airport have added to the accelerated development of its citified ways. And, like many another rapidly expanding city in today's world, Port Moresby has its suburbia, along with its daily work force commuters. Our waiter was one of them.

“Mi come long Hanuabada,” he told us, “house in Hanuabada bilong mi.” He smiled proudly, his broad nostrils flaring. In pidgin English he was saying that he came from Hanuabada, Port Moresby's distinctively different suburb. He had a house there. “You must go lookin. Is nicepela (nice fellow) town. People livin on water.” His woolly-haired head nodded emphatically, insisting we go see.

A participant in Port Moresby's Art Festival.