



# BOUGAINVILLE



St Joseph's College, Mabiri.



St Joseph's College student in class.

## Geography

Bougainville is a series of islands to the east of Papua New Guinea, technically part of the same island chain that makes up the nation of the Solomon Islands. There are two active volcanoes on the main island, which is fringed by coral reefs.

## History

Bougainville is an autonomous region in Papua New Guinea. Originally settled about 30,000 years ago, the islands of Bougainville became part of German New Guinea from the 1880s until World War I, when they became annexed to Australia's New Guinea territories. Later, in 1975 they became part of independent Papua New Guinea, as one of the Provinces of Papua New Guinea.

The devastating Bougainville Civil War, a 10-year conflict from 1988 to 1999, saw the deaths of up to 20,000, or about 10 per cent of Bougainville's population at that time. Most of the transport and infrastructure was also destroyed, and the island's economy regressed into subsistence.

Mining operations at Panguna, then the world's largest open-cut copper mine, shut down during the conflict and still remains closed. It had provided nearly 45% of Papua New Guinea's export profits. Tensions over natural resources contributed to the island's civil war – many felt mining profits were not shared fairly, and pollution was a source of tension.

Following a referendum in 2019, Bougainville became the autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB) and is now seeking independence from Papua New Guinea to become its own nation.

## Culture

Bougainville is mostly matrilineal, meaning property is passed from mother to daughter.

Geographically, culturally and linguistically, Bougainville is more similar to the Solomon Islands than Papua New Guinea.

## AMS Projects in Bougainville – St Joseph's College Program

The Marists' established St Joseph's College, Mabiri in 1999 in response to the growing need to educate young people, following the 10-year civil war in Bougainville. St Joseph's College caters for students aged between five and 20 years.

There are more than 460 students enrolled in the primary and elementary schools of the College. They receive no government support. The College also includes a high school and vocational training centre.

More than 320 of these students need to board at the school's residential facility because it is very difficult to access the school from surrounding villages, especially during the rainy season.

The college is required to fund its learning materials and accommodation costs to meet its students' needs.

## Further resources

[www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)

[www.theguardian.com.au](http://www.theguardian.com.au)

[www.abg.gov.pg/](http://www.abg.gov.pg/)

# BOUGAINVILLE



CAPITAL:  
BUKA



70% ROMAN CATHOLIC  
25% PROTESTANT  
5% OTHER

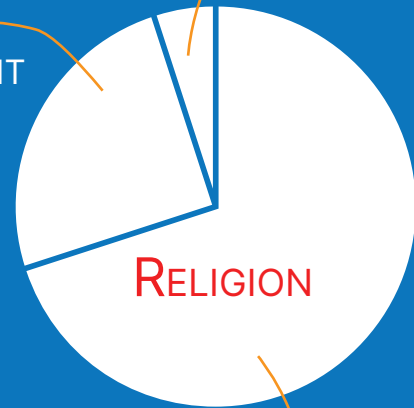
LANGUAGES  
TOK PISIN  
& ENGLISH

9,318 SQ KM  
IN LAND SIZE



FAVOURITE SPORTS:  
SOCCER

25%  
PROTESTANT



RELIGION

70% ROMAN  
CATHOLIC

POPULATION OF  
300,000



PAPUA NEW  
GUINEAN KINA

MAJOR INDUSTRIES:  
AGRICULTURE  
NATURAL RESOURCES