

Day 5, Thursday Oct 16



Our first stop was to visit the Ainom tribe. As our canoe glided onto the shore, we saw a woman in her canoe with the edges covered in fish that she was drying. We also saw a canoe being carved out. This is not for our benefit, but rather they were just building themselves a new canoe.



Aibom is known for its pottery made by the women. The pots are used for storing smoked and dried sago flour, for cooking and for lighting. The Aibom village is on a hill poking up out of these shallow depression lakes, and somewhere close by is the fine red clay they use for their pots. The clay is collected from the hills, mixed and then the vessels are built by hand. A group of women demonstrated this for us.

Once the basic form is complete, the men decorate and paint them with faces and embellishments that link the vessels to their ancestors and to the myths of

creation. The women then fire the pots in open air pyres built of dry palm fronds. The pots are also bartered for sago, fish and other products (these days, also money) that they don't have locally.

The houses here are all on stilts as is common throughout the Sepik area is prone to flooding. And underneath the houses were clay pots for sale.





This village had a dirt path with flowers and bushes bordering it. It was strange to even see a path at all. Seemed more organized than the other villages we saw. And then we saw it – a huge satellite dish!



The people here were amazingly friendly with children following us everywhere, giggling and dashing off when we tried to talk to them. But once we started taking their pictures and then showing their pictures to them, they became less bashful. We walked around with the children following us. We passed a boy just watching us intently from a window, with a bird sitting at his side. We passed a small store with a statue of Mary in the front door. We passed other little children in their window, waving at us.



As we continued to walk around the village we saw a large crocodile skin spread out on the grass drying. I'm pretty sure they're not making purses. They also had some baby crocodiles which they were patiently waiting to grow. Our guide stopped to buy some crocodile meat to take home to his village. The crocodiles live in the Sepik river which is one reason not to swim there, although the natives do. We were told that since the crocodiles are only active at night there's no problem swimming during the day. I don't think so.



And the children kept following us. We did lose them for a bit when we made our way to the outhouse. Unclear if that is there just for the few visitors they get or if they use it too. I think it was mainly for us.



We passed an area that looked like a hut with no walls but a roof held up with posts, all covered with flowers. It was part of a funeral ceremony. We hadn't learned anything about funerals, but would in a few days in Mt. Hagen.



And then it was time to climb back into our canoe and head to Wombun.

As we glided onto the shore, the first thing we noticed was a canoe with a fishing net. And the second was a tree carved with faces, like on the masks. This village is known for its carvings, both of wood and of people. Yes, of people.

