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Pope Francis, left, is welcomed by Papua New Guinea's deputy Prime Minister John Rosso, right, and rear-Admiral Philip Polewara, center, as he arrives at Port Moresby's "Jackson" International Airport, Sept. 6, 2024. As a second leg of his 11-day trip to Asia and Oceania Pope Francis' visit to Papua New Guinea will take him to a remote part of the South Pacific island nation where Christianity is a recent addition to traditional spiritual beliefs developed over millennia. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)



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Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea — September 6, 2024
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Pope Francis on Sept. 6 arrived in the South Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea, marking the start of his first ever visit to Oceania, where he will spend the next three nights in one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

The pope's journey here is the furthest country from Rome that he has visited in his 11-year-papacy. At 87-years-old, Francis has defied many expectations by undertaking a journey to a country where many governments, including the U.S. State Department, have cautioned against travel.

The pope's Sept. 2-12 journey through southeast Asia and Oceania is the longest of his pontificate. Despite his advanced age and a range of health challenges, the pope fared remarkably well during the Indonesian leg of the tour where he repeatedly pleaded for the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation to commit to reject extremism and to live harmoniously with its minority-Christian population.

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Here in Port Moresby, a city long plagued by tribal infighting and widespread poverty, the determined pontiff will have a packed schedule: meeting with government and church officials, visiting street children and even taking a day-trip to the northwest city of Vanimo. Throughout the trip, Francis is expected to address a number of local concerns, including climate change, natural disasters, violence against women and girls and rising inequality.

Following a five-and-a-half hour flight from Indonesia, the pope was greeted here by the country's deputy prime minister and welcomed with a 21-cannon salute and a performance of both the Holy See and Papua New Guinea's national anthems.

Thousands of onlookers lined the dimly lit and breezy streets of the capital city — many holding candles and flashlights and some sitting in the back of pick-up trucks

— hoping to get a glimpse of the pope as he made his way from the airport to the residence of the Vatican's ambassador here.

Francis is scheduled to meet with government and civil leaders on the morning of Sept. 6, followed by an afternoon prayer service with the country's bishops, priests, consecrated women and men and seminarians.

This story appears in the **Francis in Asia and Oceania** feature series. View the full series.