ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South West Pacific Islands

Fiji and Samoa

18th August to 30th August 2023 (13 days)

New Caledonia Extension

31st August to 4th September 2023 (5 days)



Kagu on New Caledonia by David Hoddinott

Quite simply, this is a tour unlike any other! Each island that we explore on this epic adventure exhibits its own distinctive ensemble of characteristic and rarely-seen endemics, including some of our planet's least-known species; and, although these oceanic islands and their bird lists are not large, they are nevertheless very special indeed. On this trip, we will be treated to a wonderful assortment of imperial pigeons, fruit doves (one of the most beautiful of all bird groups), parrots and lorikeets, kingfishers, hosts of flycatchers, monarchs, fantails, whistlers, honeyeaters and white-eyes, all of which are endemic and consequently found nowhere else on earth. In the mid-80s, the Kagu was critically endangered and seemingly impossible to see. Now, thanks to concerted conservation efforts by the local park authorities, it has staged a remarkable comeback, and with special help, we have an excellent chance of seeing this "missing link" in the avian world. And while seeing this iconic species may well be the main focus of the tour for many of us, we should also encounter a remarkable diversity of other spectacular avian endemics.

We begin on the islands of Samoa, visiting the main island of Upolui. Here we will explore O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, where we should be able to find a large proportion the Samoan specialities, including the lovely White Tern, Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove, Blue-crowned Lorikeet, Flat-billed Kingfisher, Samoan Fantail, Samoan Flycatcher, Samoan Whistler, the scarce Mao, a large honeyeater and Samoan Starlings.

Moving westwards, we will next wing our way to the lovely Fijian Islands, where we will wander balmy, sun-bleached beaches and explore luxuriant forests only a short distance from our delightful hotels. We will visit three islands, Viti Levu, Taveuni and Kadavu, each supporting its own coterie of exciting endemics and near-endemics. Among mist-draped montane forests, we may be treated to such spectacular surprises as Orange Fruit Dove (an almost unbelievable colour!), the enigmatic Taveuni Silktail, Azure-crested Flycatcher (a real humdinger!) and a plethora of other attractive endemics, including Fiji Goshawk, Golden and Whistling Fruit Doves, Barking Imperial Pigeon, Collared Lory, Maroon Shining and Masked Shining Parrots, Polynesian Triller, Fiji Bush Warbler, Slaty Monarch, Vanikoro Flycatcher, Fiji Shrikebill, Fiji Whistler, Fiji White-eye, Sulphur-breasted Myzomela, Fiji Wattled Honeyeater, the spectacular sounding Giant Honeyeater, Fiji Woodswallow, and the handsome Fiji Parrotfinch. We will also seek out some of Fiji's most elusive and least-known species, including Long-legged Thicketbird and Pink-billed Parrotfinch.

Our final destination is our extension to New Caledonia. A seriously ancient chip off the once enormous Gondwanaland block, New Caledonia hosts, in addition to Kagu, one of the most extraordinary aggregations of endemic plants and birds, as well as several endemic mammals and reptiles. During our time on the mainland, or "Grande Terre", we will seek out such specialities as White-bellied Goshawk, Goliath Imperial Pigeon (the world's largest arboreal pigeon), the lovely Cloven-feathered Dove, New Caledonian and the rare Horned Parakeets, the endangered and most peculiar Crow Honeyeater, New Caledonian Myzomela, Barred Honeyeater, New Caledonian Friarbird, Yellow-bellied Flyrobin, New Caledonian Whistler, New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, New Caledonian Thicketbird, Striated Starling, Green-backed White-eye, and the superb Red-throated Parrotfinch.

This is just a sample of what we can hope to see in these remarkable islands on what promises to be a most memorable tour. The islands of the Southwest Pacific have a lazy, relaxed charm about them and one of the features we can anticipate on this tour, in addition to many, many special birds, includes a fascinating collage of landscapes and culture, great food and some lovely accommodations.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Apia, Samoa**
Days 2 & 3	**O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, Samoa**
Day 4	**Apia to Nadi, Fiji**
Day 5	**Nadi to Taveuni**
Days 6 & 7	**Taveuni**
Day 8	**Nadi to Kadavu**
Day 9	**Kadavu**
Day 10	**Kadavu to Suva**
Days 11 & 12	**Birding the central highlands of Viti Levu**
Day 13	**Suva and depart**

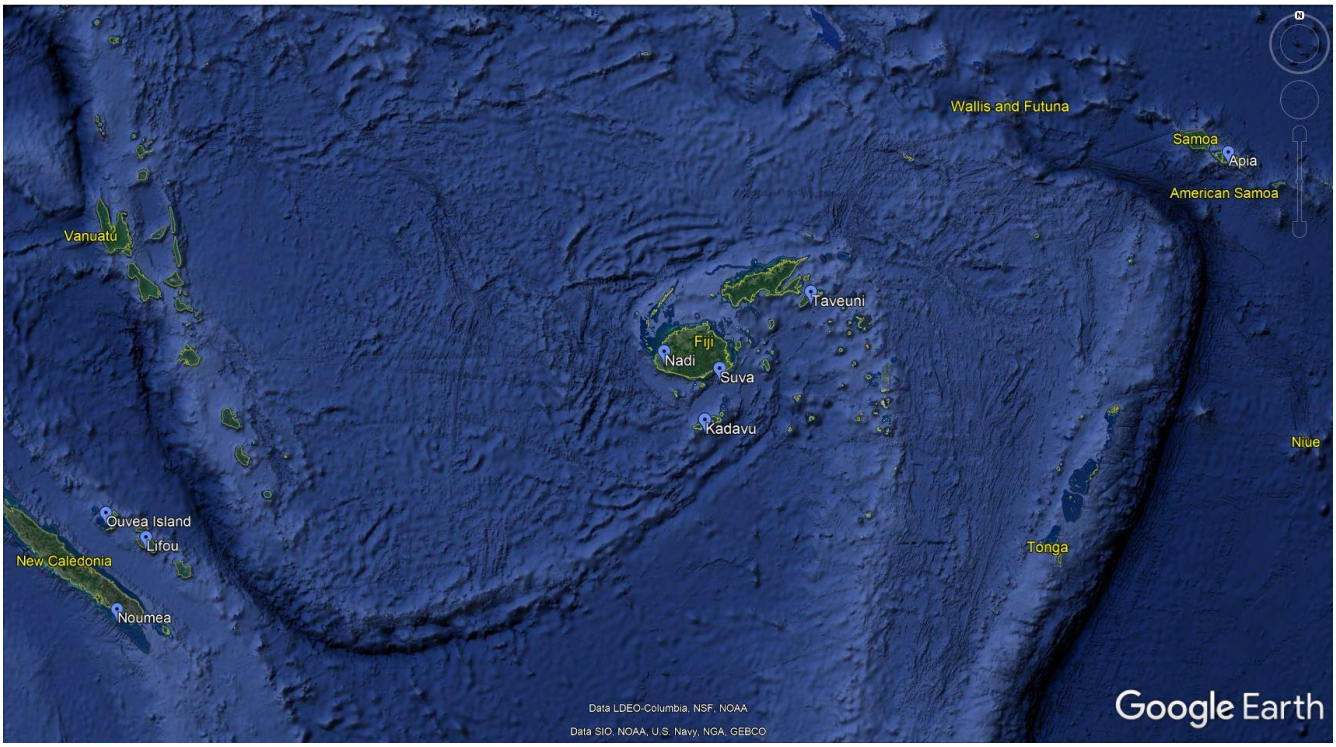
NEW CALEDONIA EXTENSION

Day 1	**Arrival in Noumea, New Caledonia – drive to La Foa**
Day 2	**La Foa & Park Des Grand Fougères**
Day 3	**La Foa and New Caledonian Thicketbird site to Noumea**
Day 4	**Riviere Bleu Reserve**
Day 5	**Final departure**

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Day 1	**Fly to Lifou, return to Noumea**
Day 2	**Fly to Ouvea, return to Noumea**

TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

Day 1: Arrival in Apia, Samoa. Guests arriving from their various points of origin will be greeted at the airport, and transported to our hotel accommodation in Apia, the capital of Samoa. In the evening we enjoy a fine dinner and discuss our forthcoming adventures.



Whistling Fruit Dove by Rich Lindie

Days 2 & 3: O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, Samoa. We have two days in which to explore the island of Upolu. Almost certainly one of the first birds we will encounter here will be Buff-banded Rail, which is unusually common and scuttles along roadsides and trails like a chicken!

We should also be able to find most of the Samoan specialities here, including Crimson-crowned and Many-colored Fruit Doves, Metallic Pigeon, Pacific Imperial Pigeon, the lovely Blue-crowned Lorikeet, Flat-billed Kingfisher, Polynesian Triller, Samoan Whistler, Samoan Flycatcher, Samoan Fantail, Samoan and Polynesian Starlings, Cardinal Myzomela, Polynesian Wattled Honeyeater and Red-headed Parrotfinch.

However, the distinctly atypical Samoan Triller and Mao, a large and at times very noisy honeyeater, require a bit more work, and if we do not find them here, we will visit a couple of other sites where we may get lucky.



Masked Shining Parrot by David Hoddinott

Day 4: Apia to Nadi, Fiji. Today we will catch a flight west across the Pacific to Nadi on the Fijian Islands.

Day 5: Nadi to Taveuni. This morning we will wing our way across exquisite turquoise seas, decorated with wonderfully untouched coral reefs to the island of Taveuni, our home for the next three nights. Our birding begins the moment we set down, as there may well be Pacific Golden Plovers and Fiji Woodswallows on the airstrip. The drive to our resort takes us along the volcanic coastline, passing through villages and coconut plantations along the way. On the journey, we will watch out for frigatebirds, Pacific Reef Heron and the handsome Fiji Goshawk.

Our resort is located right on the beach and we should find a number of gorgeous birds and butterflies right in the hotel grounds, including Collared Lory, Vanikoro Flycatcher, Sulphur-breasted Myzomela and Fiji White-eyes, whilst Black-naped and Great Crested Terns often patrol the beach.

Days 6 & 7: Taveuni. A large proportion of the Fijian endemics can be found just a short drive from our very comfortable hotel. During our stay, we will explore a range of habitats from damp, misty, moss-adorned forests atop Des Voeux Peak (4,000 feet), to the humid lowlands.



Many-colored Fruit Dove by David Hoddinott

We have a large number of species to find here, so we must be in the forest by dawn in order to maximise our chances. Characteristic species that we may encounter include Swamp Harrier, Fiji Goshawk, Many-colored Fruit Dove, Orange Fruit Dove, Barking Imperial Pigeon (unusually common for such a large bird), Fan-tailed Cuckoo, White-rumped Swiftlet, Pacific Swallow, Polynesian Triller, the lovely Pacific Robin, Fiji Whistler, Fiji Shrikebill, Slaty Monarch, Vanikoro and the gorgeous Azure-crested Flycatcher, Streaked Fantail, Fiji Bush Warbler,

Island Thrush, Polynesian Starling, Fiji Woodswallow, Sulphur-breasted Myzomela, Fiji Wattled and Yellow-billed Honeyeaters, Fiji White-eye and the striking Fiji Parrotfinch. Of course, we will also seek out the enigmatic Taveuni Silktail, which many consider Fiji's most special bird. This beautiful species, however, is as elusive as its affinities are unclear, so we will need a good dose of luck to see it!

In the late afternoon we will take a short flight back to Nadi where we will overnight.



Orange Fruit Dove by David Hoddinott

Day 8: Nadi to Kadavu. This morning we depart Nadi and wing our way the island of Kadavu (pronounced Kun da vu). We begin birding right from the airport and can expect to see at least a few of the endemic species we are targeting on the island before we even reach our lodge.

Day 9. Kadavu. Kadavu is home to four species of birds found nowhere else in the world: Whistling Fruit Dove, Crimson Shining Parrot, Kadavu Fantail and Kadavu Honeyeater. Naturally, these four birds will be the primary focus of our attention as we bird this island's forests.

General birding in the area is excellent, and mixed flocks hold Sulphur-breasted Myzomela, Polynesian Triller, Slaty Monarch, Fiji Shrikebill, Vanikoro Flycatcher, Fiji White-eye, Silvereye and Polynesian Starling. Of particular interest are the *ruficapilla* race of Fiji Bush Warbler – strikingly different to the Taveuni race, with its brightly coloured cap; as well as the *kandavensis* race of Fiji Whistler – with its white throat, it is strikingly different to the other yellow-throated races of Fiji Whistler, and was until very recently considered a different species.



Golden Fruit Dove by Rich Lindie

Day 10: Kadavu to Suva. After some final birding or perhaps a morning to relax and enjoy our attractive resort, we will fly to Suva.

Days 11 & 12: Birding the central highlands of Viti Levu. We have two days to bird the mountainous interior of the weather (wet) side of Viti Levu. This, the archipelago's largest island, still supports some luxuriant forests in the interior and hosts an exciting range of species, including the sensational

looking but peculiar sounding Golden and Many-colored Fruit Doves, vociferous Barking Imperial Pigeon, possibly Fiji Goshawk, Masked Shining Parrot, the lovely Collared Lory, Black-throated Shrikebill, and the wonderfully vocal Giant Honeyeater. In addition, we hope to see the truly rare and little-known, Long-legged Thicketbird and Pink-billed Parrotfinch.



Cloven-feathered Dove by David Hoddinott

Day 13: Suva and depart. This morning we'll enjoy some further birding around our lodge where we have further chances to see the fabulous Golden Fruit Dove and Masked Shining Parrot, as well as Giant Honeyeater, beautiful Many-colored Fruit Dove and Collared Lory. Thereafter, we head to Suva Airport where the tour will come to an end. For those continuing on with our New Caledonia extension, we will either overnight in Fiji, or begin our travels to New Caledonia depending on our flight schedules.

New Caledonia Extension

Day 1: Arrival in Noumea, New Caledonia – drive to La Foa. New Caledonia is geologically extremely old, having been cast adrift many millions of years ago from what we know today as Australia and New Zealand. As a result, its community of plants and animals have evolved in extreme isolation, to such a degree that the majority of its native inhabitants are found nowhere else in the world, thus providing us with a rare glimpse of this region's forests as they were in Gondwanaland times.



Crow Honeyeater by Rich Lindie

Our extension begins at La Tontouta Airport, well to the north of Noumea, the capital of New Caledonia. On the drive to La Foa we will be on the lookout for Whistling Kite, Masked Lapwing and New Caledonian Crow, whislt Australasian Swamphen are occasionally seen feeding along the roadside. A small dam near our hotel may hold Grey Teal, Australasian Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant and White-faced Heron.

Day 2: La Foa & Park Des Grand Fougères. Early this morning we will drive to Park Des Grand Fougères, a short distance from our hotel. We first travel through small fruit farms before reaching the forest proper. Through this stretch we will be on the lookout for Metallic Pigeon, New Caledonian Crow, Horned Parakeet and

Buff-banded Rail. Once we reach the forest we will start searching for the stunning Cloven-feathered Dove which can be found attending fruiting trees. We will make a concerted effort to find not only this species, but other specials including White-bellied Goshawk, New Caledonian Crow and Red-throated Parrotfinch which can be difficult elsewhere. Other possibilities include New Caledonian Whistler, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike and Grey Fantail.



New Caledonian Crow by David Hoddinott

Day 3: La Foa and New Caledonian Thicketbird site to Noumea. This morning we will drive to a new site north of La Foa to search for the scarce New Caledonian Thicketbird. The thicketbird's preferred habitat is around low bushes and ferns amongst open grassy areas. We will make a dedicated effort to find this declining species. Whilst focused on the thicketbird, we are likely to find Swamp Harrier, White-bellied Goshawk, Whistling Kite, New Caledonian Crow, Satin and White-rumped Swiftlets, Grey-eared and Barred Honeyeaters and Red-throated Parrotfinch. In the afternoon we will drive to our hotel in Noumea, where we will be based for the next two nights. Our drive to Noumea hugs the coast in some sections, where we may see Little Pied and Great Cormorants, Silver Gull, and Great Egret.



Horned Parakeet by Rich Lindie

Day 4: Riviere Bleu Reserve. Today's birding will largely focus around the Riviere Bleu forest reserve, which encompasses some of the best remaining lowland and hill forest on the island.

Thanks to the efforts of Yves Letocart and the Department of Forests, many of the introduced predators, which have so decimated the island's Kagu populations in the past, have been greatly reduced. This has resulted in a relatively healthy group of approximately 500 birds inhabiting the reserve. These strange, ghost-like, flightless birds, which resemble a cross between a Sunbittern and a rail with a long shaggy crest, are one of the most exciting and, until recently, amongst the most challenging birds to see on our planet.

Happily, this is no longer the case, and arriving ideally before dawn, we will listen for the Kagu's puppy-like calls that are such a characteristic sound of the forest. In the past, this was about as near as one could hope to get to encountering one of these seemingly mythical creatures. Now, thanks to intensive

conservation efforts, our chances of seeing this incredible bird are very good indeed.



Goliath Imperial Pigeon by Rich Lindie

This morning we will, therefore, depart early for the important Riviere Bleu Reserve to search for the Kagu in addition to several other really fascinating New Caledonian endemics such as White-bellied Goshawk, the huge Goliath Pigeon, Cloven-feathered Dove (a very strange and beautiful bird), Horned Parakeet (severely threatened – the Riviere Bleu reserve is one of its last strongholds), New Caledonian Parakeet, New Caledonian Crow, New Caledonian and South Melanesian Cuckooshrikes, Long-tailed Triller, Fan-tailed Gerygone, New Caledonian Whistler, Striated Starling, New Caledonian Myzomela, Barred and Crow Honeyeaters (the latter sadly now very rare), New Caledonian Friarbird and Red-throated Parrotfinch.

Later in the day we will return to our hotel in the capital where we will have our farewell dinner.

Day 5: Final departure. This morning there will be an early departure to the International Airport where our tour of these enchanted islands will end.

Optional Extensions

Day 1: Fly to Lifou, return to Noumea. This morning we will make the short flight across to the idyllic island of Lifou. Here we will search for two species found nowhere else: the very common Small Lifou White-eye, and the rather scarce and distinctly babbler-like Large Lifou White-eye. These forests also host several other birds of interest, including the lovely Red-bellied Fruit Dove and Cardinal Myzomela. During the late afternoon, we will fly back to Noumea.



Barred Honeyeater by Rich Lindie

Day 2: Fly to Ouvea, return to Noumea. This morning we will take an early flight to the island of Ouvea. This remote island has the quintessential pristine sandy white beach and is covered with low

scrubby forest. Our primary target here is the endemic Ouvea Parakeet and we will have the help of a local guide to find this scarce species. In the Afternoon we will catch a flight back to Noumea where we will enjoy a farewell dinner.

Please note: the present tour schedule will almost certainly be adjusted due to inevitable flight changes; we will, however, attempt to stick with the current itinerary as far as possible.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 13 on the main tour, and from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 5 of the New Caledonia extension;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Ferry and boat travel;
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

…and excludes:

- Visa fees, departure tax, excess luggage;
- **ANY** flights
- Any beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt

to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

PLEASE NOTE:

- This tour involves some moderate walking with a couple of more strenuous hikes. You should be in good health and of reasonable fitness to undertake this tour. If you have any physical limitations or medical conditions of any sort please do let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- Virtually all of the hotels are of reasonable to very good standard during the tour.
- Transport is mostly in comfortable vehicles, each person having a window seat, and 4x4 vehicles where required. The roads are mostly in fair condition, although we will encounter some curvy roadways with potholes, while in a few areas we have rougher unpaved roads to traverse. Due to the nature of the topography, there is the possibility of landslides interfering with our trip, though we have minimised this risk by undertaking the tour during the drier season.
- Most days in the lowlands will be hot, humid and sunny, but overcast conditions are fairly frequent and some rain, heavy at times, can be expected. In montane areas, it will range from very cool to warm. The humidity is often rather high.
- Depending on the tides, there may be a wet launch and landing to and from our lodge on Kandavu.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will begin with a welcome dinner at our hotel in Samoa in the evening of day 1. The tour will conclude after lunch at Suva International Airport, Fiji.

The New Caledonia Extension departs from La Tontouta International Airport, Noumea (New Caledonia) on the afternoon of day 1 and ends here around mid-day of day 5.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS

Faleolo International Airport, Apia, Samoa (IATA: APW) is the main port of entry for international flights for this tour and is well serviced by a number of major airlines including Air New Zealand, Fiji Airways, Samoa Airways and Virgin Australia. Nausori International Airport, Suva, Fiji (IATA: SUV) is the main port of departure.

La Tontouta International Airport, Noumea, New Caledonia (IATA: NOU) is the main port of entry and departure for the New Caledonia extension and is serviced primarily by Air New Zealand and Quantas. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**