Papua New Guinea

Birding in Paradise



Blue Bird-of-paradise by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Papua New Guinea is one of the world's great birding destinations and, for many birders, represents the ultimate journey into the heart of New Guinea. Vast tracts of rainforest, remote mountain ranges, immense river systems and isolated highland valleys support an extraordinary concentration of endemic and highly localised birds, including some of the most spectacular species on Earth. Above all, this is the land of the birds-of-paradise, and our comprehensive Papua New Guinea tour has been designed to showcase a superb cross-section of these legendary birds across the country's major habitats.

Beginning around Port Moresby, we explore the dry woodlands, wetlands and rich hill forests of the southern lowlands, including celebrated Varirata National Park. Here our targets include Raggiana Bird-of-paradise, Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher, Pheasant Pigeon, Papuan Pitta, Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler, Growling Riflebird, Goldenface, Drongo Fantail and an impressive assortment of fruit doves, kingfishers, monarchs and honeyeaters. The Raggiana display grounds provide our first opportunity to witness one of New Guinea's most iconic birds performing at close quarters.

From the lowlands we fly into the spectacular central highlands, where cool montane forest and moss-covered ridges support an entirely different bird community. Around Rondon Ridge and Mount Hagen we search for an exceptional suite of birds-of-paradise, including King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise, Blue Bird-of-paradise, Brown and Black Sicklebills, Princess Stephanie's Astrapia and the extraordinary Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, whose impossibly long white tail streamers make it one of the most remarkable birds in the world. Other highland specialities include family endemics such as Wattled Ploughbill, Mottled Berryhunter and Blue-capped Ifrit with other key targets such as MacGregor's Bowerbird, Crested Satinbird, Lesser Melampitta, Papuan Parrotfinch, New Guinea Woodcock and a wealth of distinctive berrypeckers, robins, honeyeaters and parrots. Feeders, forest trails and highland clearings provide excellent opportunities both for close observation and photography.

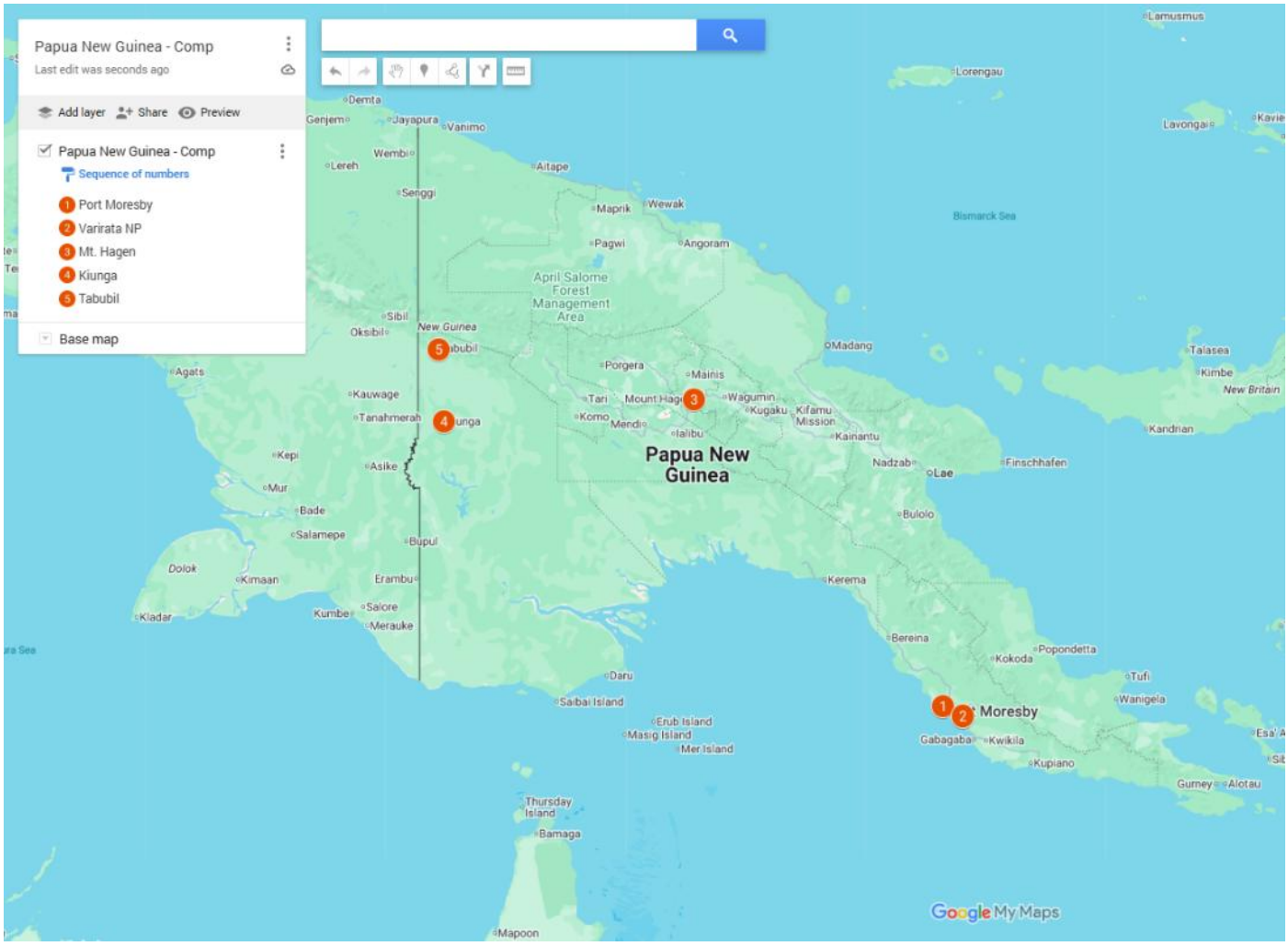
We then fly west to Kiunga, close to the Indonesian border, where the character of the tour changes completely as we enter the immense lowland forests and river systems of the Fly basin. This is one of Papua New Guinea's richest birding regions and home to another outstanding collection of birds-of-paradise. Here we seek the jewel-like King Bird-of-paradise, magnificent Greater Bird-of-paradise, brilliant Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise and radiant Flame Bowerbird, together with Trumpet and Glossy-mantled Manucodes. The supporting cast is equally impressive and may include Blue Jewel-babbler, Hook-billed Kingfisher, New Guinea Bronzewing, Grey-headed Goshawk, Palm Cockatoo, Papuan Eclectus, Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot and numerous fruit doves, imperial pigeons and lowland forest specialities.

One of the great adventures of the tour is our boat journey along the mighty Fly and Elevala Rivers, travelling through remote swamp forest in search of Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise displaying from riverside snags and the huge, fan-crested Sclater's Crowned Pigeon. Palm Cockatoos, Blyth's Hornbills, Papuan Spinetails, imperial pigeons and flocks of other lowland birds add to the spectacle.

This is a true Papua New Guinea birding experience rather than a leisurely introduction. We travel extensively by air, road and boat, moving between lowland rainforest, riverine swamp forest, dry woodland and montane forest at elevations approaching 3 000 metres. Early starts, long birding days, muddy forest trails, basic infrastructure in some areas and the unpredictability of domestic aviation are all part of travelling in this extraordinary country. In return, the tour offers access to some of the finest birding on Earth and an exceptional concentration of iconic species, particularly birds-of-paradise, in landscapes that remain among the wildest and least disturbed in the region.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Port Moresby**
Day 2	**Varirata National Park**
Day 3	**Port Moresby; flight to Mount Hagen**
Days 4 & 5	**Rondon Ridge**
Day 6	**Rondon Ridge to Mount Hagen**
Days 7 & 8	**Mount Hagen area**
Day 9	**Mount Hagen; flight to Tabubil via Kiunga**
Days 10 & 11	**Tabubil & Ok Menga area**
Day 12	**Tabubil to Kiunga**
Day 13	**Kiunga area**
Day 14	**Kiunga down the Elevala River**
Day 15	**Return to Kiunga**
Day 16	**Kiunga; flight to Port Moresby**
Day 17	**Port Moresby area**
Day 18	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

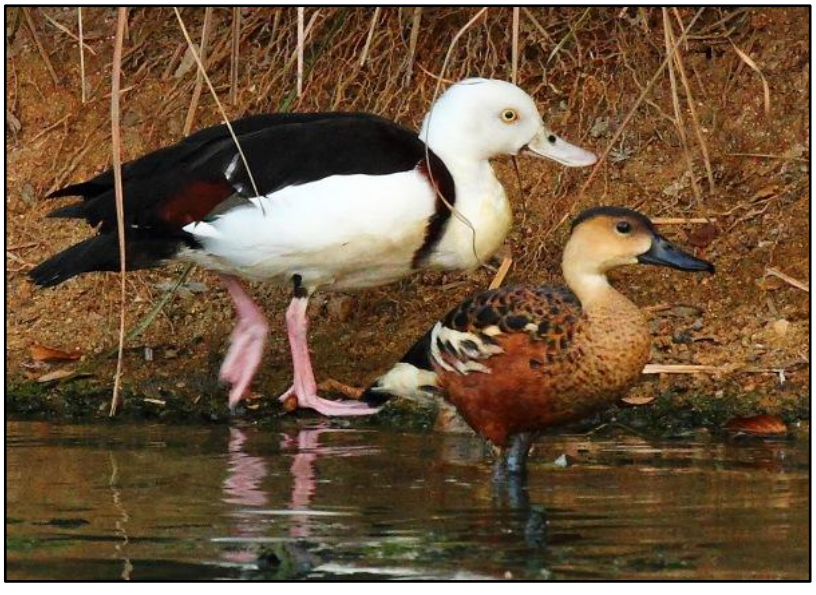
Pacific Adventist University. The Pacific Adventist University affords a pleasant introduction to some of the woodland and wetland birds of the island. The expansive grounds of the university contain gardens and patches of habitat suitable for a surprising variety of lowland species that can literally teem with birds.



Fawn-breasted Bowerbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

We'll likely find the huge Blue-winged Kookaburra with its distinctive raucous call, flocks of migrant Black-faced Cuckooshrike that can often number more than 50 at a time, as well as the attractive Rufous-banded and Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters. The loud calls of Helmeted (New Guinea) Friarbird are heard throughout the grounds, while conspicuous Black-backed Butcherbirds and the huge, skulking Pheasant Coucal patrol the scrubby edge. One of the key birds here is the subtly attractive Fawn-breasted Bowerbird and we will also look for Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Torresian Crow, the locally uncommon Bar-shouldered Dove, endemic Grey-headed Mannikin and flocks of attractive Australasian Figbird and Yellow-faced Myna. The grounds support many ponds, and we can expect to see Comb-crested Jacana, Purple (Australasian) Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen and good numbers of Pacific Black Duck and Wandering and Plumed Whistling Ducks. Other species we may encounter include Green Pygmy Goose, Grey Teal, Radjah Shelduck and Nankeen Night Heron. Overhead we will keep an eye out for Whistling and Brahminy Kites, noisy Rainbow Bee-eaters, White-breasted Woodswallows and Pacific Swallow. Variable Goshawk hunt throughout the grounds, and in the late afternoon we will seek out a roost of the impressively large Papuan Frogmouth!

Varirata National Park. Varirata National Park is situated in the foothills above the city. En route to the park entrance, we will pass by the head of the notorious Kokoda Trail, where valiant efforts by Australian and local troops halted the Japanese march during the Second World War.



Radjah Shelduck & Wandering Whistling Duck by Glen Valentine

The dry eucalypt forests that flank the quiet access road to Varirata provide superb birding and noisy screeches will reveal pairs of stunning Black-capped Lory and flocks of busy Coconut Lorikeet and Red-cheeked Parrot. Here we will find a mix of New Guinea endemics and species shared with Australia. Likely birds may include the attractive White-shouldered Fairywren, Black Sunbird, White-throated Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Leaden Flycatcher, Brown Oriole, Spangled Drongo and noisy Hooded Butcherbird, while we will also work hard to try and locate the scarce, White-bellied Whistler.

Upon entering the park, we will spend the morning slowly walking the narrow trails that enter the moister evergreen hill forest. These well-marked trails wind through a variety of habitats with some excellent lookouts over Port Moresby and the coastline, providing a full day of new sights and sounds.



Raggiana Bird-of-paradise by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The forests here are particularly rich in kingfishers; in fact, New Guinea hosts the world's highest density of these desirable birds with 24 species known to occur! We will search for the PNG endemic Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher, one of several paradise kingfisher species found on the island and distinguished by their long trailing tails. Further kingfishers to be found today may include Yellow-billed, Azure, Forest, Papuan Dwarf and Sacred, while the most attractive of all the giant kingfishers, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, is also a possibility.

Columbids are very well represented here too, particularly the stunning collection of Fruit Doves that include Wompoo, Pink-spotted, Superb, Beautiful and Orange-bellied. Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove, Metallic Pigeon and the elusive Pheasant Pigeon are other species we will be on the lookout for. The latter is likely to be heard but we would be very fortunate to observe this secretive ground dweller. Other species we might find on the trails include White-faced Robin, Black Cicadabird, Barred Cuckooshrike, Sooty Thicket Fantail and inquisitive Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Frilled, Black-faced and Spot-winged Monarchs, Green-backed Honeyeater, Rusty Mouse-warbler with its continuous squeaky-gate call, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Grey Whistler, Rusty Pitohui and the poisonous Hooded Pitohui, Pale-billed Scrubwren, Growling Riflebird with its loud, guttural calls, Fairy Gerygone, Black Berrypecker and Spectacled Longbill. The last two mentioned species belong to the Berrypecker family that is endemic to New Guinea. Two other taxonomic oddities that sometimes join the mixed feeding flocks at Varirata are Goldenface and Drongo Fantail and while both are difficult to track down, we will certainly try our best as they are both of great interest. We will also attempt to locate Barred Owlet-nightjar, a localised endemic, by checking some potential roost sites.



Crested Satinbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Besides the Pheasant Pigeon, several other secretive terrestrial birds occur in Varirata, all of them a challenge to observe! These include Black-billed Brushturkey, Crested Pitohui, Cinnamon and White-breasted Ground Dove, Painted Quail-thrush, the stunning Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler and Papuan Scrub Robin. Any of these require luck but it would take a huge dose of luck to bump into a Dwarf Cassowary or Forest Bittern, although we have done just that on past tours! However, the absolute highlight of the day will be witnessing the marvellous performance by

testosterone-ridden male Raggiana Bird-of-paradise. Adorned with elaborate red and orange flank plumes, they dance in anticipation of a potential mate. We will visit a display site where we may see good numbers of displaying males and receptive females. After this unforgettable experience, we will know for sure that we really are in birders' heaven!



Greater Lophorina by Lev Frid

Rondon Ridge. Sitting on the outer edge of the Kubor Range, our lodge sits at an altitude of around 2 150masl. Powered by its own eco-friendly hydro plant, this rather luxurious lodge enjoys stunning views over the Wahgi Valley and Mount Hagen itself. The lodge gardens are host to White-shouldered Fairywren (here of the black and white northern race), Mountain Myzomela, Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove, Mountain Honeyeater, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Yellow-browed Melidectes.

A spectacular diversity of Bird-of-paradise occur here, including the elaborately plumed King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise, Greater Lophorina (Superb Bird-of-paradise) with its protruding iridescent breast-shields, outrageous Blue Bird-of-paradise, the rare Black and more widespread Brown Sicklebills and impressive Princess Stephanie's Astrapia! With the keen knowledge of local guides, we will attempt to see as many of these jewel-like species as possible, some of which may be performing their ritualistic displays.

Rondon Ridge is a good area to search for some of the more elusive of the 7 endemic bird families of New Guinea. The fabulous Wattled Ploughbill is common here although not easy to see as it moves around in the incredibly lush bamboo growth. The very skulky Mottled Berryhunter is also to be found here, but as always, it is much easier to hear than actually see! Poisonous Blue-capped Ifrits are relatively common at the higher parts of the trail. Besides these specialities, we will search some of the forest trails in the area for some other highly sought-after species such as the elusive MacGregor's Bowerbird (generally easy to see here!), Goldie's Lorikeet, Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot, Black Pitohui, Black-throated Honeyeater, Black-mantled Goshawk, Orange-crowned Fairywren, Sclater's Whistler, Lesser Melampitta, Streaked and Mid-mountain Berrypecker, and Blue-faced Parrotfinch. It is arguably the best site in the country to track down a couple of rare and rather obscure species, namely Yellowish-streaked Honeyeater and Papuan Parrotfinch.



Mottled Berryhunter by Lev Frid

On one of our days here we shall depart the lodge shortly after a hot coffee or tea to take a slow hike up the ridge. Walking through cool forest we are likely to find parties of Buff-faced and Large Scrubwren and perhaps some mixed species flocks, whilst if we hear the piping call of Spotted Jewel-babbler we will certainly do our best to see it! Upon reaching a clearing at the summit, we shall watch and wait for the call of Black Sicklebill, another speciality of Rondon Ridge. With luck we shall see one of the massive males dash into the open, before skulking away again. We can also expect to find the commoner Brown Sicklebill, the simply incredible King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise and hopefully a few male Princess Stephanie's Astrapia with their amazing tails. We will keep our eyes open for the quiet Rufescent Imperial Pigeon feeding in the mid-canopy, Yellow-billed, Papuan and the odd, Orange-billed Lorikeet, Rufous-backed Honeyeaters, Black-breasted Boatbill and Rufous-naped Bellbird.



Eastern Crested Berrypecker by Dušan Brinkhuizen

We'll head back down the trail to bird a patch of lower altitude forest for the very desirable Blue Bird-of-paradise and the somewhat commoner, but no less attractive Superb Bird-of-paradise. If available, we will head over to look at an active bower of the rare MacGregor's Bowerbird, although we are more likely to encounter this species at a favoured fruiting tree. We may even be able to find a male with their impressive long orange crest! Mixed flocks move through in a frenzy, but with care we may find Loria's Satinbird, Fan-tailed Berrypeckers, Black Monarch, and Island Leaf Warbler.

Several other species that are likely to be found as we search for the area's specialities include White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Papuan Mountain Pigeon, Ornate Melidectes, Little Shrikethrush, Black and Dimorphic Fantail, Papuan Sittella, Hooded Pitohui, and Black-throated Robin. At the end of each day, we will enjoy the spectacular views over the Wahgi Valley and across to the stunning alpine peaks of Mt Hagen and Mt Giluwe. Nocturnal walks could produce a sighting of Papuan Boobook or even the rare Feline Owlet-nightjar.



Wattled Ploughbill by Lev Frid

Mount Hagen area. Our lodge is situated at 2,900m (9,600ft), inside a lush alpine forest patch. Here we will concentrate our efforts on the montane forest patches and secondary forest habitat in and around this fabulous area. We are likely to linger at the lodge feeders where the remarkable Ribbon-tailed Astrapias will compete with Brown Sicklebill, Common Smoky and Grey-streaked Honeyeaters, Belford's Melidectes, Brehm's Tiger Parrot, Papuan Island Thrush, White-winged Robin and Rufous-naped Bellbird

for our attention! A constant flow of hungry birds throng to the feeders, providing incredible photographic opportunities. Many of us will no doubt spend hours birding from here, with a cup of coffee in hand and coal stoves nearby!



Blue-capped Ifrit by Glen Valentine

The heavily mossed trails around our lodge produce some exciting birding and here we will seek out the secretive Rufous-throated Bronze Cuckoo, Friendly and Dimorphic Fantails, stunning Regent Whistler, Orange-crowned Fairywren, Wattled Ploughbill, Garnet Robin, Mountain Mouse-warbler and Large Scrubwren. The Stella's Lorikeet is one of the world's most beautiful parrots, and both the stunning black form and more gaudy red form occur around the lodge. Flocks of the attractive, monotypic Blue-capped Ifrit feed like nuthatches along branches and are now known to be even more poisonous than the Hooded Pitohui! Eastern Crested Berrypeckers sometimes forage around the lodge grounds, while other lodge specialities include Lesser Melampitta, Mountain Firetail, stunning Crested Satinbird, New Guinea Woodcock (a resident in the bogs around the lodge), and Mountain Owlet-nightjar that sometimes perches on tree-ferns outside the cabins at night. Even the rare Feline Owlet-nightjar occurs around the lodge, and we will work hard to try and locate this very difficult species.

A number of other elusive species occasionally attend the feeder and it is hard to predict what will be around, but past visitors have included Archbold's Bowerbird and Crested Satinbird, Bronze Ground Dove, Mountain Mouse-warbler and both Forbes's and Chestnut Forest Rail, although seeing any of these species at the feeder would be a huge bonus. Mammals sometimes visit as well, most commonly a marsupial carnivore called Speckled Dasyure, or perhaps a Raffray's Bandicoot. By night Black-tailed Giant Rat and De Vis' Woolly Rat also sometimes visit.



King Bird-of-paradise by Glen Valentine

Although the region of Mount Hagen is rather heavily cultivated, the areas of standing native habitat can produce a wide variety of remarkable endemic species. The area below the lodge offers possibilities of seeing a host of mouth-watering specials such as dazzling Blue, Superb and Magnificent Bird-of-paradise, Lawes's Parotia, Bar-tailed, Amboyna and Great Cuckoo-Doves, attractive Ornate Melidectes, Mid-mountain and rarely observed Streaked Berrypeckers, Torrent Flyrobin and with luck the striking and rather elusive Torrent-lark. Other birds we will search for include the localised, Yellow-breasted Bowerbird, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon, Hooded Mannikin, Papuan White-eye, the beautiful Mountain

Myzomela, Island Leaf Warbler, Long-tailed Shrike and best of all, the localised Lesser Bird-of-paradise. (Please note however that accessing the Lesser BOP site largely depends upon local weather and road conditions and is not always possible.)



Shovel-billed Kookaburra by Stephan Lorenz

In a nearby patch of forest, we will search for slightly lower elevation species that could include White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Mountain Swiftlet, Plum-faced Lorikeet, Red-collared Myzomela, Loria's Satinbird, Black-breasted Boatbill, Black-bellied Cuckooshrike, Ashy Robin, Fan-tailed Berrypecker and Tit Berrypecker. Male Brown Sicklebills utter their incredibly loud machine-gun staccato call from a regular post. However, the star here is the King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise. We hope to encounter a stunning male waving his weird head-plumes around and uttering its strange buzzing calls. This forest patch also offers our best chance at tracking down the elusive Mottled Berryhunter.

Tabubil & Ok Menga. The forests around Tabubil provide some excellent birding and we have opportunities for observing some rarely seen birds. Target species we will search for include the delightful, Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot, which feeds nuthatch-like along mossy trunks, high-flying, Blue-collared Parrot, Stout-billed, Grey-headed and stunning Golden Cuckooshrikes, Sahul, Black-shouldered and Black Cicadabirds, Black-winged Monarch, under-recorded Grey-green Scrubwren, the highly localised Obscure Berrypecker, Capped White-eye, Mottle-breasted, Puff-backed and Spotted Honeyeaters, as well as Black Butcherbird. In recent years we have even found the mega Thick-billed Berrypecker and Sooty Shrikethrush.

Several birds-of-paradise also occur here, and we hope to see Magnificent Bird-of-paradise and perhaps hear its unique clapping noise as it snaps its wings like two small stones being banged together. Queen Carola's Parotia with their spatula head wires may appear and we may also encounter Crinkle-collared Manucode.



Lawes's Parotia by Lev Frid

In a remnant patch of primary forest where we will search for Pesquet's Parrot and the mega Shovel-billed Kookaburra, which despite being relatively commoner here, is still a very difficult species to see. Other highly sought-after species here include Pheasant Pigeon, Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler, White-rumped Robin, Metallic Pigeon, Striated, Josephine's and Fairy Lorikeets, Orange-fronted Hanging Parrot, Crested Pitohui, Wallace's

Fairywren, Red Myzomela, Spotted and Obscure Honeyeater, Southern Variable Pitohui, Rufous-backed Fantail, Magnificent Riflebird and Olive Flyrobin.



Hook-billed Kingfisher by Glen Valentine

During our time here, we shall also pay a visit (maybe a few) to a nearby hydro-electric plant where we hope to find New Guinea's three torrent specialists: Torrent Flyrobin, Torrent-lark and the erratic Salvadori's Teal. These three fast-flowing river species are particularly attractive but the latter two species are equally difficult to pin down, and perseverance and patience will be required to see these highly desirable species. The general birding around the plant can, however, be quite rewarding and flocks of Dusky and Black-capped Lory are often in attendance, as are Red-flanked and Coconut Lorikeets, Dusky-cheeked Fig Parrot, gaudy Papuan Eclectus, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater and Mountain Peltops.

We will also spend one late afternoon watching an area where we have a reasonable chance of seeing the rare and much sought-after Pesquet's Parrot flying over the lush forests from their feeding areas to their roost sites. While waiting and watching for the parrots we may pick up other interesting species such as Chestnut-breasted and White-eared Bronze Cuckoos, Black-billed Coucal, White-bellied Thicket Fantail and Scrub Honeyeaters. Although we will be visiting during the dry season, this is one of the wettest spots in the world and rain can well be expected!

Kiunga area. The port town of Kiunga is located in extreme western PNG along the border of West Papua, the Indonesian half of New Guinea. Situated on the north bank of the Fly River, Kiunga was built to service the giant Ok Tedi copper and gold mine. Although Kiunga is situated approximately 1,300 nautical kilometres from the Fly River mouth, the berthing of huge ships bears testament to the size of this impressive river.



Salvadori's Teal by Glen Valentine

We will bird a nearby area of fabulous, untouched lowland rainforest where we have a chance of encountering several mouth-watering forest specialities. The forest interior is always hard work but with patience and perseverance, we hope to observe some of the shy and secretive forest dwellers. These could include Stephan's Emerald Dove, Thick-billed Ground Pigeon, White-breasted Ground Dove, White-crowned Cuckoo, Dwarf Koel, White-bellied Thicket Fantail, the brightly coloured Golden Monarch, vociferous Papuan Babbler, the indescribably stunning Blue Jewel-babbler and tricky-to-see Hook-billed Kingfisher with its adapted ground-hunting bill.

One of our main targets here will be the gem-like King Bird-of-paradise. The smallest bird-of-paradise, we will position ourselves at a known tree where this beauty displays from the tangles, with strident calls and raised iridescent green shoulder fans. Its fabulous, wired tail ends in a stunning green spiral and the red and white plumage leaps out of the dark green forest once it has been spotted.



Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise by Dušan Brinkhuizen

As one of PNG's most famous birding sites, it is here that David Attenborough was hoisted into the treetops for the marvellous footage of displaying Greater Bird-of-paradise. This remarkable footage is one piece of the highly recommended video Attenborough in Paradise, which stars many of the bird-of-paradise species found in Papua New Guinea, performing their elaborate display rituals. Many bird-of-paradise species keep to traditional display trees that are used by generation after generation. Specific trees are generally well supported by a healthy population of the indescribably beautiful Greater Bird-of-paradise. We will have ample opportunity to observe these elegant beauties as they strut their stuff, competing for the attentions of the rather drab females. Rhythmic displays, wing mantling and posturing, loud, raucous and incessant calling and frequent mating are a constant affair. Many guests might consider this their top experience in PNG!



Greater Bird-of-paradise by Dušan Brinkhuizen

At another nearby site, our key target will be the incredibly beautiful Flame Bowerbird. We will spend time at a lookout near to a colony of these birds, hoping for fly-by or perched views. The radiant orange males really do appear aflame, and this must rank as one of the world's most beautiful birds. Other species to be found in the area include the rare Grey-headed Goshawk, shy and elusive New Guinea Bronzewing, Long-tailed Honey Buzzard, Pacific Baza, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, petite Red-flanked Lorikeet, Yellow-streaked Lory, thumb-sized Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot, the starkly contrasted Papuan Eclectus (named due to the remarkable difference between the red-and-blue females and green males), Orange-bellied, Beautiful, Dwarf, Pink-spotted and scarce Ornate Fruit Doves and Zoe's, Pinon's and Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeons. There is also the distinctive Long-billed Cuckoo – the male having a strikingly bright red eye-ring, noisy Sahul Brush Cuckoo, brilliant Emperor Fairywren, Red-capped Flowerpecker, Long-billed, Obscure, Plain and Streak-headed Honeyeaters, Ruby-throated Myzomela, diminutive Pygmy Longbill and Meyer's Friarbird. Further bird-of-paradise species include

the glossy-black Trumpet and Glossy-mantled Manucodes, which often perch prominently atop dead trees to utter their loud retching calls. A nearby area of dry grassland may produce Red-backed Buttonquail and/or Australian Pratincole and, if we are very lucky, flocks of elusive and nomadic White-spotted and Black Mannikin or even a Crimson Finch.



New Guinea Flightless Rail by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Elevala & Fly Rivers. We will depart in the predawn mists swirling over the mighty Fly River on a boat journey into the rich swamp forests and lowlands. The Fly River's source is situated in the higher reaches of the central divide from where it then winds its way south-east, being joined later by the Strickland River. Our destination today is the Elevala River, one of the tributaries of the Fly.

As dawn breaks, we will be looking along the riverbanks waiting for one of the world's strangest birds to make an appearance – the Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise! This yellow-and-black creature with a most unusual shape and a dozen bizarre, wire-like feathers bending upwards from it's rear-end, performs its ritual maypole shuffle on a dead snag. After witnessing the unique dance of one of the world's most desirable birds, we will continue our journey up the river. Travelling slowly, we will be looking out for the giant Palm Cockatoo, a huge black parrot with a floppy crest, massive, hooked bill and bright red cheek-patch that flies noisily overhead. Further species along the river might include the Large Fig Parrot, Shining Flycatcher, Large-billed Gerygone, Lowland Peltops and the scarce, Yellow-eyed Starling hidden amongst huge numbers of Metallic Starling. We should also encounter large flocks of Collared Imperial Pigeon, Papuan Spinetail, dozens of Oriental Dollarbird and the strange Grey Crow. Parties of noisy Blyth's Hornbill sound like steam trains passing overhead and are delightfully common while migrant flocks of giant Channel-billed Cuckoo from Australia occur in breath-taking numbers at times.



Sclater's Crowned Pigeon by Dušan Brinkhuizen

However, our key target once we enter the quiet Elevala River is the huge, fan-crested Sclater's Crowned Pigeon. The *Goura* genus that includes Victoria, Scheepmaker's and Western Crowned Pigeon are the world's largest surviving columbids, all four of which are endemic to New Guinea.

We'll spend time walking the narrow trails of the surrounding forest for the dawn chorus. Canopy bird parties here can keep us occupied for hours and leave us with warbler-neck. Possible new species include Wompoo Fruit Dove, Rufous-backed

Fantail, Yellow-bellied Gerygone, Hooded and Spot-winged Monarchs, the scalloped, blue-crowned Wallace's Fairywren, Little Shrikethrush, Yellow-bellied Longbill, shy and secretive Ochre-breasted Catbird and most localised of all, flocks of noisy White-bellied Pitohui. The forest trails also allow us the very slim possibility of observing the giant Southern Cassowary; though not an uncommon species, it does tend to be incredibly shy. Other regular species that are more likely to be encountered are Ivory-billed Coucal, elegant Moustached Treeswift, up to three species of Paradise Kingfisher (Little, Common and Buff-breasted), secretive Hooded and Papuan Pittas as well as Black-sided Robin.



Flame Bowerbird by Glen Valentine

A night forest walk will offer us the chance to see some of PNG's most sought-after nocturnal species including Marbled Frogmouth, Papuan Boobook, the inexplicably rare Papuan Hawk-Owl, seldom seen Wallace's and Starry Owlet-nightjars and Sooty Owl. We may also encounter New Guinea Crocodile, which can be prolific along the river edges!

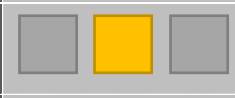


Little Paradise Kingfisher by Rob Williams

Brown River & Hisui Mangroves. The Hisui Mangroves area could provide us with Mangrove Gerygone, Black Thicket Fantail and/or Dusky Lory feeding amongst the fruiting coconut palms. A walk to the beach may yield Beach Stone-curlew or Lesser Frigatebird. A nearby lake often holds Green Pygmy Goose and Spotted Whistling Duck, while the few flowering shrubs are excellent locations for both Silver-eared and Brown-backed Honeyeaters.

We will also bird an area near the Brown River that consistently proves productive. Walking along the riverine habitat and dense secondary growth we will search for such beauties as Coroneted and Dwarf Fruit Doves, Yellow-streaked Lory, the radiant Golden Myna, Dusky Myzomela, Common Paradise Kingfisher, exquisite Emperor Fairywren and, if we are lucky, the rare Streak-headed Mannikin, amongst many others. An area of nearby grassland may yield Great-billed, Grey-headed or Chestnut-breasted Mannikins as well as Papuan Harrier. Stands of Eucalyptus woodland could produce White-throated Gerygone, Bar-shouldered Dove, Grey Shrikethrush, Black-backed Butcherbird, Forest Kingfisher, White-winged Triller and Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		This is a moderate to difficult tour. You should have a VERY GOOD level of fitness, stamina, and be in good health. Not suitable for dedicated or avid photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges.
Birding Ease		Moderate to demanding. Bird density is low; many visuals are high in the canopy. Several difficult target species.
Accommodation		Reasonable to good, 1 night very basic.
Walking / Trails		Some trails can be very muddy and fairly steep to very steep. Long days on our feet.
Vehicles / Roads		Some bumpy drives, poor road conditions in general.
Photography		Reasonable, typical rain forest conditions of variable light and frequent rain.
Annoyances		Malaria, chiggers and other biting insects. Environment varies from very hot & humid to cold, with some nights at high altitude.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 18;
- Bottled drinking water, tea and coffee at meals;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights (except as stated above);
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions & activities;
- Special gratuities;
- 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.

- Single Supplement is NOT available at the basic lodge on the Elevala River.

- There is no Twin Sharing option in Tabubil – all room shave double beds only. Couples set to share two single beds in a Twin room will be allocated a Double bed, non-couples set to share two single beds in a Twin room will be split into separate rooms. There will be no surcharge for non-couples that require separate rooms.

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

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original programme as possible.**

- This tour DOES require a VERY GOOD level of fitness and stamina. Participants should also be in good general health. Much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- We will be away from modern medical facilities for much of this tour.
- Trails around the Elevala River, the Rondon Ridge area and in Varirata National Park can be excessively muddy depending on weather conditions.
- This Papua New Guinea tour is designed to be an intensive birding experience, and we will attempt to obtain good views of as many bird species as possible.
- In some areas, it can get very hot and humid, especially in the lowlands. We will thus make good use of the early mornings and will have a lot of early starts to avoid, as far as possible, birding in the heat of the day. Rainforest areas often have high humidity.
- We spend several nights in the highlands of New Guinea at an altitude of approximately 2 900m (9 600ft) above sea level, meaning that cooler evenings and early mornings should be expected.
- Due to the nature of Papua New Guinea's economy, the cost vs delivery in terms of quality of items and services is highly disproportionate.
- New Guinea is always a challenging place to visit, and it is not unusual for logistics to go awry - expect some hassles along the way. Delays, sometimes significant, should be expected when taking the several internal flights that are necessary to access remote locations. Weather or airline problems might cause delays that are out of our control.
- Birding in Papua New Guinea is very challenging. Many species are incredibly shy and difficult to observe along trails. The Lesser Bird-of-paradise lek may be inaccessible due to poor road conditions.
- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase / duffel bag and one carry-on bag as space in the vehicles is limited.
- Malaria is prevalent in New Guinea - consult your physician or local travel clinic for specific advice.
- Rubber boots are particularly useful along the many muddy trails and are highly recommended.
- We will spend many hours waiting for birds to appear at various locations where no seating is available. A small, folding stool may be beneficial.
- Due to the nature of some trails, a collapsible hiking pole may be beneficial.
- Accommodation varies greatly in Papua New Guinea, from good in the primary cities such as Port Moresby to very basic along the Elevala River. Some hotels and lodges will be below the standard of what you have come to expect from the developed world and can suffer from issues related to basic maintenance. We will stay either in hotels or guesthouses except for our accommodation along the Elevala River, where the small, elevated bunkhouse has

only the most basic facilities (mattress, bedding and mosquito net, plus a forest clearing where washing facilities include cold water and an outhouse.)

- Domestic flights within Papua New Guinea have a baggage limit of 16kg per person for checked luggage and 5kg for hand luggage. (Airlines in PNG have however become more tolerant towards travellers carrying heavy / expensive camera and other optical equipment and often waive overweight hand luggage fees.)

IMPORTANT – Internal Flights in Papua New Guinea

Internal air services in Papua New Guinea are highly unreliable. Flights may be delayed, rescheduled or cancelled outright, sometimes with little or no notice. Cancellations can result in delays of several days, and alternative scheduled flights may not be available.

Although uncommon, serious disruption may require substantial changes to the itinerary, additional accommodation or ground transport, rerouting, or the use of a privately chartered aircraft to continue the tour. Any additional costs arising from such disruption, including charter flights, accommodation, transport or other associated expenses, will be for the affected guests account and should be claimed from your travel insurers.

By booking a Papua New Guinea tour, guests should be aware and accept that significant aviation disruption is a genuine risk of travelling in the country. Rockjumper cannot guarantee the operation of scheduled internal flights or absorb additional costs arising from airline cancellations, or other circumstances beyond our control. Guests must ensure that their travel insurance provides adequate cover for these types of disruption and associated expenses.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is allocated as an arrival day, and you should have arrived in Port Moresby by midday, as the afternoon will be spent birding near to Port Moresby. The main tour will conclude by mid to late morning on day 18 at Port Moresby International Airport.

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.

Due to the unreliable nature of the internal flights in Papua New Guinea, it is highly recommended to take an afternoon or evening departure flight on the final day of the tour, or a morning flight the day after.

Port Moresby International Airport (IATA: POM) is the main port of entry for international flights into Papua New Guinea, and is serviced most reliably by Air Niugini from Brisbane, Singapore or Cairns. We will book all domestic flights of this tour on your behalf.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.