Papua New Guinea

Birds-of-paradise & Central Highlands (Relaxed)



Raggiana Bird-of-paradise by Lev Frid

Papua New Guinea is one of the world's great birding destinations, a land of extraordinary forests, dramatic mountains and some of the most spectacular birds on Earth. Foremost among these are the legendary birds-of-paradise, whose dazzling colours, elaborate plumes and remarkable displays have fascinated naturalists for centuries. On this specially designed Relaxed tour, we place these iconic birds firmly at centre stage, combining excellent highland birding with carefully chosen lowland sites and plenty of time to enjoy the experience rather than simply race after an ever-growing species list.

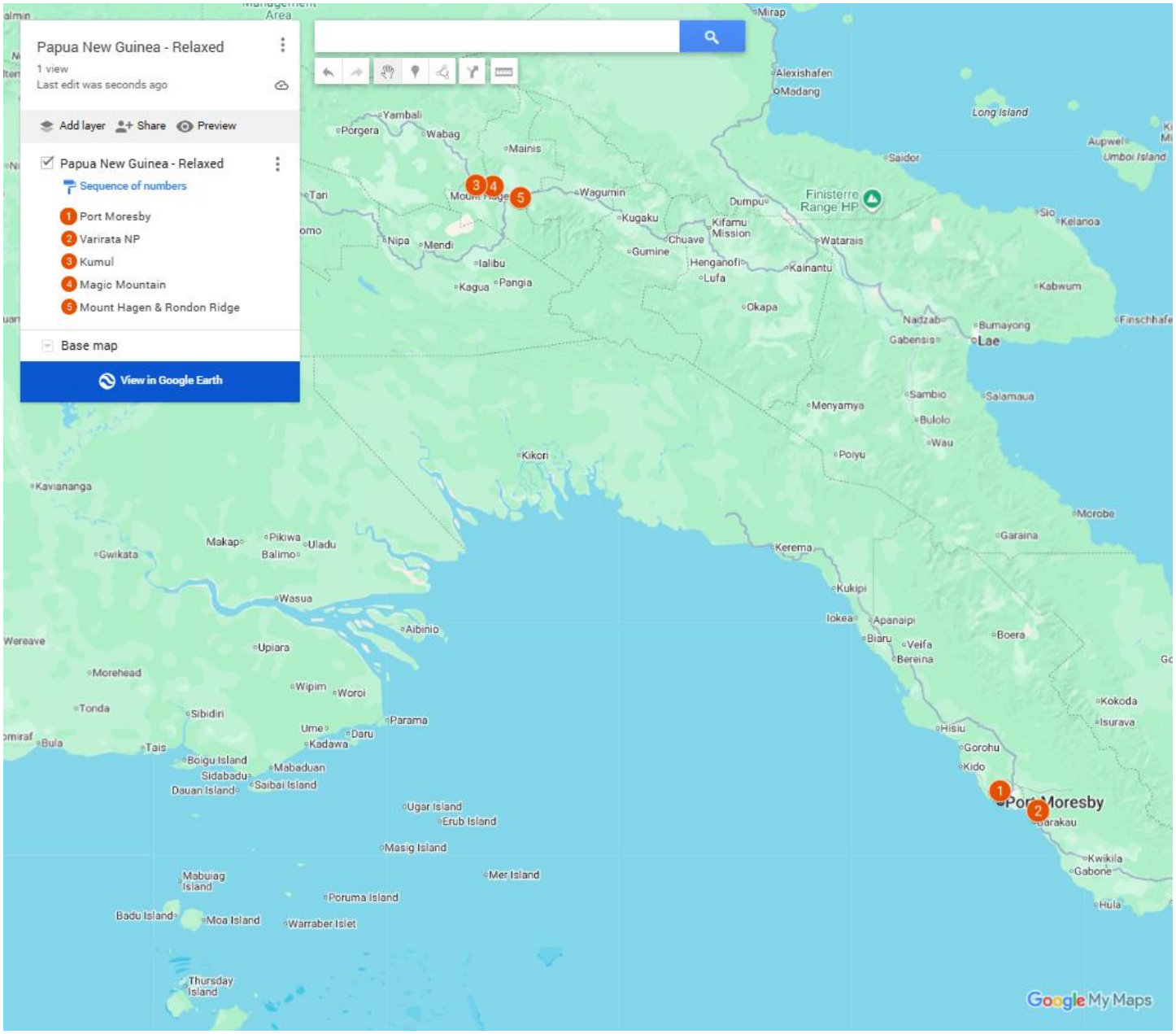
Beginning around Port Moresby, we explore the forests, wetlands and savannas of Brown River, Hisiu and Varirata National Park, where an impressive variety of parrots, fruit doves, kingfishers, honeyeaters and other New Guinea specialities provides a superb introduction to the island's birdlife. We then travel into the Central

Highlands, spending extended periods at renowned birding locations including Kumul, Magic Mountain and Rondon Ridge. Here the focus shifts strongly towards birds-of-paradise, with opportunities to watch and photograph several species from established feeding areas, hides and blinds, alongside a fascinating supporting cast of highland endemics.

Rather than attempting to cover enormous distances or pursue every difficult forest skulker, this itinerary concentrates on rewarding sites, memorable birds and prolonged viewing opportunities. The result is a gentler and more immersive introduction to Papua New Guinea: spectacular birds-of-paradise, beautiful mountain scenery, rich forest birding and some of the finest wildlife experiences this remarkable country has to offer.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Port Moresby. Afternoon at Pacific Adventist University (optional)**
Day 2	**Brown River & Hisiu Mangroves**
Day 3	**Varirata National Park**
Day 4	**Port Moresby; flight to Mount Hagen & transfer to Kumul**
Day 5	**Kumul**
Day 6	**Kumul to Magic Mountain**
Day 7	**Magic Mountain**
Day 8	**Magic Mountain to Rondon Ridge**
Days 9 to 11	**Rondon Ridge – bird hides & surrounds**
Day 12	**Rondon Ridge to Mount Hagen; flight to Port Moresby**
Day 13	**Varirata National Park**
Day 14	**Final departure**


Papua New Guinea - Relaxed
1 view
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Papua New Guinea - Relaxed
Sequence of numbers
1 Port Moresby
2 Varirata NP
3 Kumul
4 Magic Mountain
5 Mount Hagen & Rondon Ridge
Base map
View in Google Earth
Mirap
Alexishafen
Madang
Yambali
Porgera
Wabag
Mainis
Tari
Wagumin
Kugaku
Dumpu
Finisterre Range HP
Saidor
Long Island
Aupwel
Umboi Island
Sio
Kelanoa
Nipa
Mendi
Ialibu
Kagua
Pangia
Chuave
Kifamu Mission
Gumine
Henganofi
Lufa
Watarais
Kainantu
Okapa
Kabwum
Nadzab
Bumayong
Lae
Gabensis
Finschhafe
Menyamya
Sambio
Salamaua
Bulolo
Wau
Poiyu
Kikori
Kavianangga
Morobe
Garaina
Kerema
Makap
Pikiwa
Uladu
Balimo
Gwikata
Wasua
Aibinio
Kukipi
Iokea
Apanaipi
Biaru
Veifa
Bereina
Boera
Upiara
Morehead
Wipim
Woroi
Tonda
Sibidiri
Parama
Ume
Daru
Kadawa
Bula
Tais
Boigu Island
Sidabadu
Mabaduan
Dauan Island
Saibai Island
Hisiu
Gorohu
Kido
Kokoda
Isurava
Port Moresby
Barakau
Ugar Island
Erub Island
Masig Island
Mer Island
Kwikila
Gabone
Hula
Mabuiag Island
Poruma Island
Badu Island
Moa Island
Warraber Islet
Thursday Island
Google My Maps

Birding sites in detail

Pacific Adventist University. With its broad lawns, mature woodland, gardens and numerous ponds, PAU provides an exceptionally easy and pleasant introduction to Papua New Guinea birding. The terrain is flat and open, and many species can be enjoyed at close range.

The grounds support a particularly varied mixture of woodland and wetland birds. Blue-winged Kookaburra, Black-backed Butcherbird, Helmeted (New Guinea) Friarbird and the attractive Rufous-banded and Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters are all regular, while we will also look for Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Grey-headed Mannikin, Australasian Figbird and Yellow-faced Myna. Pheasant Coucal often skulks through the rougher vegetation, while Rainbow Bee-eaters and White-breasted Woodswallows provide plenty of activity overhead.



Papuan Frogmouth by Lev Frid

The university's ponds are likely to add the attractive Comb-crested Jacana, Purple (Australasian) Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen and good numbers of Pacific Black Duck and both Wandering and Plumed Whistling Ducks. Green Pygmy Goose, Radjah Shelduck and Nankeen Night Heron are also possible. As the afternoon cools, we will keep watch for Variable Goshawk, both Whistling and Brahminy Kites and the enormous Papuan Frogmouth.

Brown River & Hisiu Mangroves. We'll visit the Brown River area, where riverine forest, secondary growth, grassland and open Eucalyptus woodland support an excellent variety of lowland birds. Among the more colourful possibilities are Coroneted and Dwarf Fruit Doves, Yellow-streaked Lory, Golden Myna, Dusky

Myzomela and Common Paradise Kingfisher, while the exquisite Emperor Fairywren is another particular target. With luck, we may also encounter the scarce Streak-headed Mannikin. More open areas can produce Great-billed, Grey-headed and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, with Papuan Harrier occasionally quartering the grasslands, while nearby woodland may hold Forest Kingfisher, White-throated Gerygone, White-winged Triller, Black-backed Butcherbird and the tiny Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot.

Later, we continue towards Hisiu, where mangroves, coconut palms, coastal scrub and wetlands provide a contrasting suite of species. Here we will search for mangrove specialists such as Mangrove Gerygone and Black Thicket Fantail, while fruiting palms may attract Dusky Lory and other parrots. Along the coast we may find Beach Stone-curlew, with Lesser Frigatebird and other seabirds occasionally passing offshore. Nearby wetlands can hold Green Pygmy Goose and Spotted Whistling Duck, while flowering vegetation is particularly attractive to Silver-eared and Brown-backed Honeyeaters.



Blue-capped Ifrits by Lev Frid

Varirata National Park. The park lies in the foothills above Port Moresby and offers some of the most accessible and rewarding lowland forest birding in southern Papua New Guinea. En route we pass the start of the historic Kokoda Trail before climbing through open Eucalyptus woodland, where Black-capped Lory, Coconut Lorikeet and Red-cheeked Parrot may pass overhead. These drier forests hold a useful mixture of New Guinea endemics and more widespread Australasian species, and we may encounter White-shouldered Fairywren, Black Sunbird, White-throated Honeyeater, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Brown Oriole, Spangled Drongo and Hooded Butcherbird, among others.

Inside the park, the vegetation changes to moister evergreen hill forest and we will spend time exploring a selection of well-established trails at an unhurried pace. The birding here can be wonderfully varied, with mixed

feeding flocks moving through the mid-storey and canopy, and several viewpoints offering impressive panoramas across the surrounding hills and, on clear days, towards the distant coastline. Rather than pursuing every difficult skulker, our focus will be on the more rewarding and visible species that make Varirata such an enjoyable birding site.

The park is particularly rich in kingfishers, a group for which New Guinea is justly famous. We will search for Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher, Yellow-billed Kingfisher and Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher, while the striking Rufous-bellied and Blue-winged Kookaburras are also likely. Fruit doves and pigeons are also especially well represented, with Pink-spotted, Superb, Beautiful and Orange-bellied Fruit Doves all possible, together with Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove and Metallic Pigeon.



Ribbon-tailed Astrapia by Daniel Danckwerts

Elsewhere in the forest we may encounter White-faced Robin, Frilled and Black-faced Monarchs, Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Green-backed Honeyeater, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Grey Whistler, Fairy Gerygone, Black Berrypecker and Spectacled Longbill. Growling Riflebird can also occur here, while known daytime roosts occasionally give us the chance to see the localised Barred Owlet-nightjar without having to search after dark.

The undoubted highlight of Varirata, however, is the magnificent Raggiana Bird-of-paradise. We will visit a traditional display area where males gather to perform, spreading their extraordinary red and orange flank plumes while calling and dancing for attending females. Watching several of these spectacular birds displaying together in the forest canopy is one of Papua New Guinea's great wildlife experiences and a fitting centrepiece to our time at Varirata.

Kumul. Set at around 2,900 metres (9,600 feet) in the highlands above Mount Hagen, Kumul Lodge is one of Papua New Guinea's most famous birding locations. Surrounded by cool montane forest and attractive gardens, the lodge allows us to enjoy a remarkable selection of highland species with very little effort, and much of our time here will be spent birding around the grounds, feeders and nearby forest edge.



Blue Bird-of-paradise by Lev Frid

The feeders are a particular highlight and can be extraordinarily busy. Spectacular Ribbon-tailed Astrapias are often among the stars of the show, their impossibly long white tail streamers making them one of the most memorable birds-of-paradise in New Guinea. Brown Sicklebill also visits regularly, while a supporting cast can include Common Smoky and Grey-streaked Honeyeaters, Belford's Melidectes, Brehm's Tiger Parrot, Papuan Island Thrush, White-winged Robin and Rufous-naped Bellbird. With birds often feeding at close range, this is superb photography territory and there will be ample opportunity simply to settle in with a cup of coffee and watch the procession unfold.

The lodge gardens and surrounding forest edge add plenty more variety. Stella's Lorikeet occur in both its striking red and darker forms, while Blue-capped Ifrits forage along moss-covered branches in their characteristic nuthatch-like fashion. We may also encounter Mountain Firetail, Eastern Crested Berrypecker, Crested Satinbird, Garnet Robin, Regent Whistler, Orange-crowned Fairywren, Friendly and Dimorphic Fantails, Wattled Ploughbill and Large Scrubwren. The surrounding forest can also produce Mountain Myzomela, Papuan White-eye, Island Leaf Warbler and other high-elevation specialities.



Brown Sicklebill by Daniel Danckwerts

One morning we may venture to the Murmur Pass area, where the slightly lower elevation gives us access to a different suite of species. Here we will search for such attractive birds as White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Plum-faced Lorikeet, Red-collared Myzomela, Loria's Satinbird, Black-breasted Boatbill, Fan-tailed and Tit Berrypeckers, while the deep, rapid-fire call of Brown Sicklebill may carry through the forest. We may also have an early opportunity for King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise, with males sometimes advertising from high canopy perches.

Magic Mountain. From Kumul we descend to Magic Mountain, situated at a somewhat lower elevation in the Mount Hagen area and consequently offering us a different selection of highland birds. Our time here will again be deliberately unhurried, with much of the birding concentrated around the lodge, its balcony, nearby feeding areas and established hides.

The lodge itself can be remarkably productive. From the balcony we may enjoy close views of Princess Stephanie's Astrapia and the unusual Short-tailed Paradigalla, together with Common Smoky Honeyeater, Red-collared Myzomela and a variety of other highland species moving through the surrounding vegetation. Even the tricky, monotypic Mottled Berryhunter has been found in the garden on several occasions. With birds often appearing close to the lodge, there should be plenty of opportunity simply to settle in and enjoy whatever comes to us.



King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise by Rob Williams

Nearby hides provide another major attraction and excellent photographic opportunities. Brown Sicklebill regularly occurs in the area, while Belford's Melidectes and other highland birds may also visit at close range. Spending time quietly in these hides gives us the chance to study birds behaving naturally without having to continually move through the forest.

One of the great prizes at Magic Mountain is the extraordinary King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise. Adult males possess two absurdly elongated head plumes, quite unlike anything else in the bird world, and wave them prominently while giving strange buzzing calls. With luck, we may enjoy prolonged views of a displaying male from one of the established viewing areas.

Rondon Ridge. Set at around 2,150 metres (7,050 feet) on the outer edge of the Kubor Range, Rondon Ridge combines superb highland birding with one of the most comfortable settings on the tour. The lodge enjoys magnificent views across the Wahgi Valley towards Mount Hagen and Mount Giluwe, while its gardens, forest edge and surrounding montane forest support an exceptional variety of birds. White-shouldered Fairywren, Mountain Myzomela, Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove, Mountain Honeyeater, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Yellow-browed Melidectes are among the species that may be encountered close to the lodge itself.

Rondon is particularly renowned for its extraordinary diversity of birds-of-paradise. King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise, Princess Stephanie's Astrapia, Brown Sicklebill, Lawes's Parotia, Greater Lophorina and the magnificent Blue Bird-of-paradise all occur in the surrounding forests. With several days at our disposal, we can concentrate on obtaining good, prolonged views of these remarkable birds rather than simply rushing from one target to the next.



Greater Lophorina by Lev Frid

A major feature of our stay will be the excellent network of feeding stations, display sites and photographic blinds now available in the wider Rondon area. One morning may be devoted to a Blue Bird-of-paradise display site, followed by time at a productive feeder and a Lawes's Parotia display area. These sites offer superb opportunities to watch and photograph some of New Guinea's most remarkable birds at close range, often while they behave naturally and remain in view for extended periods.

On another day we plan to visit a display site for Magnificent Bird-of-paradise before spending time at a nearby feeding station. This can attract both Magnificent and Raggiana Birds-of-paradise, together with a busy

supporting cast of honeyeaters, manucodes, Black Butcherbird and other foothill species. Later in the day we may continue to a recently established hide for Lesser Bird-of-paradise.

Accessible foothill forest provides a useful contrast to the higher-elevation habitats around Rondon itself. Easy trails through this forest give us the opportunity to add a range of lower-altitude species, and the area lends itself well to some gentle afternoon birding.



Lawes's Parotia by Lev Frid

There is plenty to occupy us away from the hides and feeders as well. The lodge surrounds and accessible forest can produce MacGregor's Bowerbird, Goldie's Lorikeet, Orange-crowned Fairywren, Sclater's Whistler, Black Pitohui, Ornate Melidectes and a variety of fantails, honeyeaters, robins and berrypeckers. Fruiting trees can be particularly productive, while the quieter lodge grounds may reveal new birds throughout the day.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Easy to Moderate. A relaxed-paced tour with limited strenuous activity, but some uneven forest trails, altitude & occasionally rough road conditions.
Birding Ease		Easy to Moderate. Much of the birding is around lodge gardens, feeders, hides, forest edge & open habitats. Some forest birding can be slower, but we largely avoid difficult skulking species.
Accommodation		Comfortable. Particularly good at Rondon Ridge, with simpler but well-located highland lodges elsewhere.
Walking / Trails		Most birding is close to lodges, feeders & hides, with short walks on forest trails & along roads. No steep climbs/trails are planned.
Vehicles / Roads		Generally comfortable. Main roads are mostly reasonable, although some secondary & access roads can be rough, uneven or affected by weather.
Photography		Good, especially around lodge gardens, feeders & dedicated photographic hides, with opportunities for several birds-of-paradise at close range.
Annoyances		Conditions range from hot & humid around Port Moresby to cool at higher elevations. Rain, muddy or uneven trails, insects, altitude & occasional rough roads should be expected.

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 14;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- Fees for included hides & blinds;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- 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.

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.

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- **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 notice 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 program as possible.**

- This Papua New Guinea tour is specifically designed to offer an easier and more relaxed birding experience than our longer and more comprehensive tours. We purposefully avoid difficult trails, strenuous hikes and the more basic accommodation used on some other itineraries.
- A basic level of fitness and good general health is required. Most birding is undertaken around lodge grounds, along roads, at feeders and photographic hides, and on relatively short forest trails. We specifically avoid sustained steep climbs.
- We will be away from modern medical facilities for portions of this tour.
- Trails at Varirata National Park and around some of the highland lodges can become muddy and slippery after rain. Waterproof walking shoes or boots with good grip are recommended. Rubber boots may be useful after prolonged rain but are not essential.
- A collapsible walking pole may be useful on muddy or uneven forest trails, particularly after rain, but is not essential.
- Lowland areas around Port Moresby can be hot and humid. We generally concentrate our birding during the cooler parts of the day and avoid unnecessary activity during the hottest periods where possible.
- We spend several nights in the New Guinea highlands, reaching approximately 2,900m (9,500ft) at Kumul Lodge. Cool evenings and early mornings should be expected, and some participants may notice the effects of altitude.
- Forest birding in Papua New Guinea can sometimes be challenging, with some species shy or difficult to observe. On this tour, however, we focus primarily on more accessible birding, feeders, hides, display sites and conspicuous species rather than spending extended periods pursuing difficult forest skulkers.
- Photography opportunities are good, particularly around lodge gardens, feeding stations and dedicated photographic hides. Several birds-of-paradise may be observed and photographed at very close range.
- Papua New Guinea can be logistically unpredictable. Flight delays and cancellations, schedule changes, road conditions and other operational disruptions occur from time to time and may require itinerary adjustments beyond our control.

- Due to the nature of Papua New Guinea's economy, the cost of accommodation, transport and other services can appear disproportionate to the standard of delivery. Standards of maintenance and service may also be inconsistent compared with similarly priced facilities elsewhere.
- Accommodation on this tour is generally comfortable, although standards of maintenance and service in Papua New Guinea can vary.
- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on bag, as luggage space in the vehicles is limited.
- Malaria is prevalent in parts of Papua New Guinea. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for current advice regarding appropriate preventative measures.
- 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. If you would like to join the optional afternoon birding at PAU, please ensure you have arrived in Port Moresby by midday. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 14.

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.