Hawaii

Island Endemics



Iiwi by Stephan Lorenz

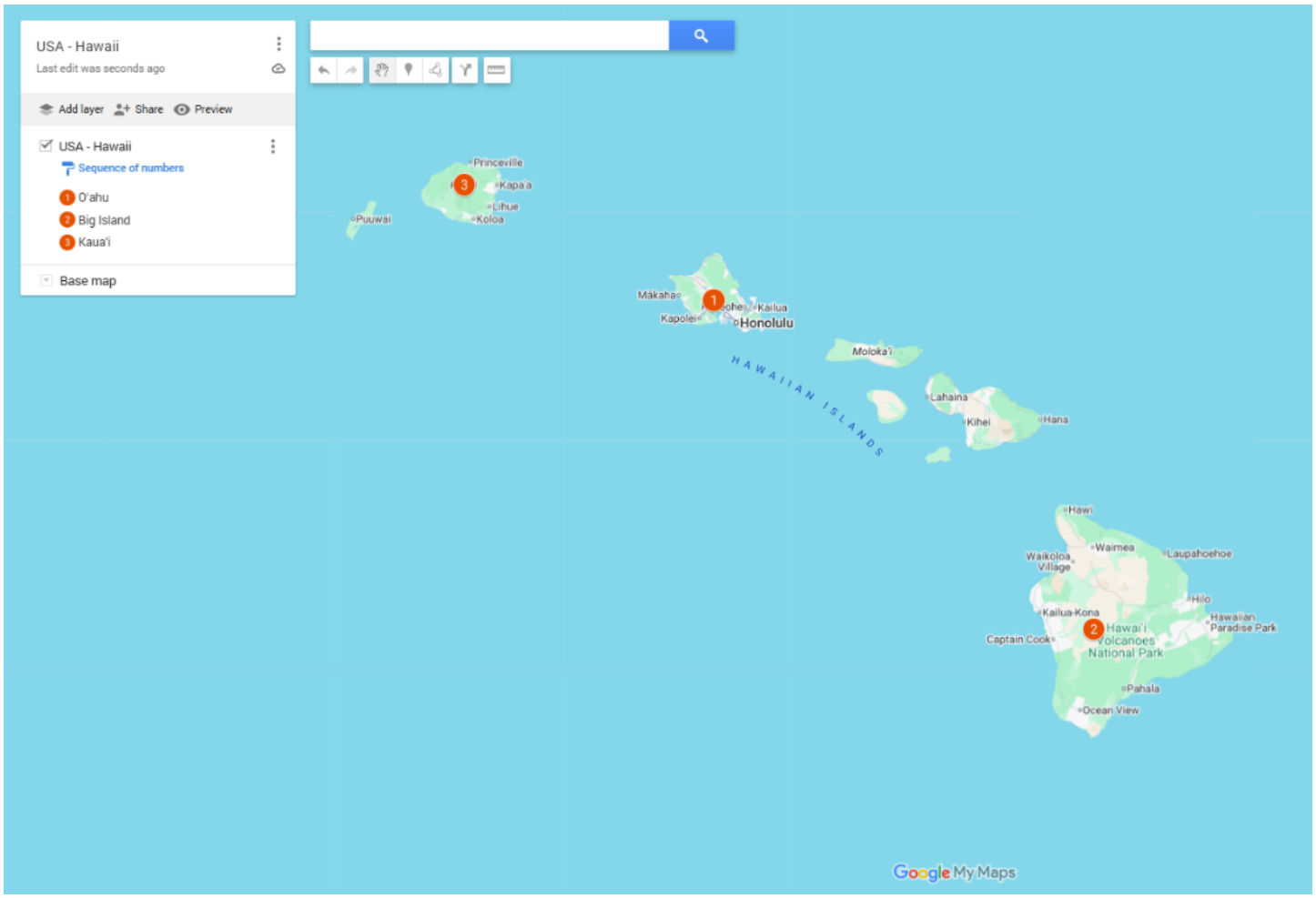
Hawaii is the most remote archipelago on Earth, located north of the equator in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Aside from the Islands' world-renowned beauty, many unique features attract naturalists here, chiefly the high degree of endemism among the various life forms, active volcanism, verdant & varied native forests, & the surrounding great wilderness of the Pacific Ocean. The island chain's Hawaiian Honeycreepers have long attracted birders – & understandably so. These diverse forms evolved from a single ancestor akin to a North American finch into nectarivores, bark-pickers, insect gleaners, & borers in a remarkable array of brilliant colours.

These honeycreepers, along with native birds of other families, have unfortunately been decimated, beginning with the arrival of the Polynesians & continuing with the introduction of mosquitoes & a multitude of alien plant & animal species. Many bird species have consequently gone extinct, & the remaining survivors face a precarious future.

Our tour covers three of the major islands in search of some of the most endangered birds on the planet, while also featuring fantastic scenery & phenomenal underwater life. Some of the top birds of the tour include the bizarre Akiapolaau, endangered Bristle-thighed Curlew, tricky Hawaiian Petrel, elegant White (Fairy) Tern & the charismatic Iiwi, amongst other endemic targets such as Oahu Elepaio, Hawaii Creeper, Anianiau & Hawaii Akepa. Join us as we focus on these surviving endemic forest species, seabirds, & other Hawaiian avian specialities, along with the riches of this fabulous chain of picturesque tropical islands.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival into O'ahu**
Day 2	**Birding O'ahu (Kapiolani Park, Koolau Mountains, North Shore & Laie Point)**
Day 3	**O'ahu to Big Island**
Day 4	**Birding Big Island (Hakalau Forest NWR & Saddle Road)**
Day 5	**Big Island pelagic**
Day 6	**Big Island to Kaua'i**
Day 7	**Birding Kaua'I (Kilauea Point NWR, Hanalei NWR, Koke SP & Waimea Canyon)**
Day 8	**Final departures**



Birding sites in detail



Oahu Elepaio by Forrest Rowland

O'ahu: Kapiolani Park. Kapiolani Park is conveniently located close to our hotel. Here we'll admire visiting Pacific Golden Plovers and Honolulu's city bird, the elegant White Tern. While exploring the park, we are likely to encounter a variety of introduced species among the banyan and rainbow shower trees, including Common Myna, Red-crested Cardinal, Red-vented Bulbul, Yellow-fronted Canary, Java Sparrow, Common Waxbill, Spotted Dove, Zebra Dove, and Rose-ringed Parakeet.

O'ahu: Koolau Mountains. A high-elevation ridge road provides access to the upper rainforest of the Koolau Mountains, with sweeping views over Honolulu and Pearl Harbor. Here we'll search for O'ahu's endemic honeycreeper, the O'ahu Amakihi, before descending into the valleys to look for the endangered O'ahu Elepaio. Along the way, we are likely to encounter White-rumped Shama, noisy flocks of Red-billed Leiothrix, occasional Red-whiskered Bulbul, and chattering Warbling (Japanese) White-eyes.

O'ahu: Laie Point. The overlook at Laie Point on O'ahu's north shore is an excellent vantage point for scanning the ocean below in search of seabirds such as Sooty Tern and Sooty Shearwater. With luck, we may also encounter the rarely seen, near-endemic Christmas Shearwater or Grey-backed Tern.

O'ahu: North Shore. While cruising the coastline, famous for world-class surf beaches and secluded coves with basking sea turtles, we may encounter colourful finches such as Saffron Finch and Chestnut Munia. The North Shore is also home to some of the last family farms on O'ahu, producing coffee, cacao, eggplant, papaya, pineapple, and banana, along with scattered shrimp farms where Black-crowned Night Heron may be found.

A series of small wetlands in the area provides good habitat for Hawaiian Coot, the Hawaiian subspecies of Common Gallinule, Wandering Tattler, and Black-necked Stilt, along with several



Oahu Amakihi by Stephan Lorenz



Akiapolaau by Stephan Lorenz

introduced species including Common Waxbill, Spotted and Zebra Doves, and Red-vented Bulbul. Our primary target here, however, is the Vulnerable Bristle-thighed Curlew, a unique and scarce shorebird that winters in modest numbers..

Big Island: Kailua-Kona. Hawai'i, the youngest and most geologically active island in the chain, is larger than all the other main islands combined and is commonly referred to as the "Big Island." We will transfer to the west side and the town of Kailua-Kona. Time permitting, we may search for some of the more localized introduced species in the area, such as Indian Peafowl, Red-masked Parakeet, Lavender Waxbill, and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Big Island: Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge is one of the premier birding sites in Hawai'i and a stronghold for native honeycreepers. This restricted-access montane cloud forest supports many of the islands' endangered plants, native arthropods, and endemic birds.

Working through the open forest, we will search for species such as Hawai'i Creeper, the striking orange Hawai'i Akepa, Hawai'i Elepaio, Omao, and the remarkable Akiapolaau, known for its unique bill adapted for chiselling and probing. One of the highlights is the stunning Iiwi, a signature species of the islands. We will also keep watch for the scarce endemic Hawaiian Hawk.

Big Island: Saddle Road. Mauna Kea is a massive dormant volcano rising over 4,200 meters above sea level. Measured from its base, it is the tallest mountain on Earth, exceeding 10,000 meters in total height. The forests along Saddle Road support a diverse avifauna, and we will make several short stops to look for species such as the endemic Hawaiian subspecies of Short-eared Owl, Eurasian Skylark, Black and Grey Francolins, Chukar Partridge, California Quail, Wild Turkey, and Erckel's Spurfowl.

Big Island: Pelagic. We dedicate much of the day to a pelagic trip out of Honokohau, weather permitting. In inshore waters, we may encounter



Fairy Tern by Forrest Rowland



Hawaii Akepa by Forrest Rowland

species such as Masked Booby, Brown Booby, Black and Brown Noddies, White-tailed Tropicbird, and Great Frigatebird.

Further offshore, Sooty and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are likely, along with Bulwer's Petrel and both Sooty and White Terns. In deeper waters, we will scan carefully for fast-flying petrels, which may include Black-winged, Juan Fernández, Mottled, and, with luck, Hawaiian Petrel. Additional possibilities include White-necked Petrel, Newell's and Christmas Shearwaters, Leach's Storm Petrel, and Long-tailed and South Polar Skuas. Cetaceans are also a regular bonus.

Kaua'i: Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. Kaua'i is widely regarded as the greenest and most scenic of the Hawaiian Islands and is also the oldest of the main islands. Kilauea Point offers spectacular coastal views, with Brown and Red-footed Boobies, along with Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds, often seen soaring near the lighthouse. With luck, we may also encounter the impressive Laysan Albatross.

This is also an excellent site for Nene, the endemic Hawaiian Goose, whose population on Kaua'i has benefited from successful conservation efforts on this mongoose-free island.



Nene by Forrest Rowland

Kaua'i: Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge. Time permitting, we will visit Hanalei NWR, an excellent wetland site supporting species such as Hawaiian Coot and the endemic Hawaiian Duck (Koloa), as well as occasional migrant and vagrant birds.

Kaua'i: Koke State Park. The rugged mountains of Kaua'i are densely forested, and winding roads provide access to the island's interior. Native forest birds are largely restricted to elevations above 3,000 feet, where cooler conditions limit mosquito populations and the spread of avian malaria.

Walking along boardwalks and forest trails, we will search for several rare species. Apapane, one of the most widespread and vocal



Apapane by Stephan Lorenz

honeycreepers, is often encountered, and with luck we may also find Anianiau or Kaua'i Elepaio. Introduced species are common here as well, including Warbling White-eyes, Japanese Bush Warbler, Chinese Hwamei, and Red Junglefowl.

Kaua'i: Waimea Canyon. On our descent from the highlands, we will stop at the spectacular Waimea Canyon, often referred to as the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific." White-tailed Tropicbirds can sometimes be seen along the cliffs, and we may also encounter introduced species such as Erckel's Spurfowl.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	⬜🟨⬜	Moderate. Suitable for most birders & general wildlife enthusiasts. Expect several early starts & some long days, often in warm, humid conditions.
Birding Ease	⬜🟨⬜	Moderate. While many species are accessible, several endemics (and some exotics) require patience & effort to locate.
Accommodation	⬜⬜🟩	Comfortable to very comfortable throughout.
Walking / Trails	⬜🟨⬜	Largely easy, with much birding from roadsides. A few outings involve more challenging walks on uneven or muddy trails.
Vehicles / Roads	⬜⬜🟩	Travel is in well-suited vehicles on generally good roads, though some rougher or unpaved sections are expected.
Photography	⬜🟨⬜	Good opportunities overall, though some species may be high in the canopy or in low light conditions.
Annoyances	⬜🟨⬜	High humidity, frequent afternoon rain, & insects are to 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 8;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- Pelagic;
- All guiding services

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- No tips or 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.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour. If you feel that your leader/s 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 program as possible.**

- Most birding will involve easy walking on roads, wide trails, and from a boat. Some areas, particularly in the Koolau Mountains, can be rocky, humid, slippery, muddy, and buggy, with gentle elevation gain.
- The Alakaʻi Plateau (bordering Kōkeʻe State Park) is montane wet forest at around 4,000 ft (1,200 m), with temperatures typically ranging from 50–80°F (10–27°C). It is among the wettest places on Earth.
- Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge is also a montane rainforest (c. 6,400 ft / 1,950 m), where conditions are often cool (50–70°F / 10–21°C), damp, and muddy, even when it is not raining.
- Guests should be in good health and possess a reasonable level of fitness to comfortably manage walking in potentially slippery and uneven conditions.
- Accommodation throughout the tour is comfortable and well-appointed.

- Transport between sites is by minibus. Roads are generally in good condition, though occasional delays due to landslides are possible given the terrain.
- Lowland areas are typically hot, humid, and sunny. In higher elevations, temperatures range from cool to mild. Rain is likely at some point during the tour, particularly in Kaua'i's central mountains, which receive extremely high annual rainfall. Sun protection is just as important as rain protection.
- Some early starts are necessary to reach key birding areas and for the pelagic, allowing us to take advantage of optimal morning conditions before trade winds and afternoon showers develop. Other days will have more relaxed departures.
- Sea conditions on pelagic trips vary from calm to moderately rough. Participants should be comfortable on a moving boat and able to maintain balance.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will depart from Honolulu International Airport (IATA: HNL), O'ahu on day 1. As this day has been set aside as an arrival day, you are welcome to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in the late morning of day 8 at Lihue Airport (IATA: LIH).

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.

Honolulu International Airport (IATA: HNL) is the main port of entry into Hawaii for this tour, whilst Lihue Airport (IATA: LIH) is the main port of exit.

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.