Southwest Pacific Islands

Samoa & Fiji

New Caledonia Extension



Orange Fruit Dove by David Hoddinott

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 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, 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 several islands, 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 and Natewa Silktails, 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 extension to New Caledonia visits this 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.

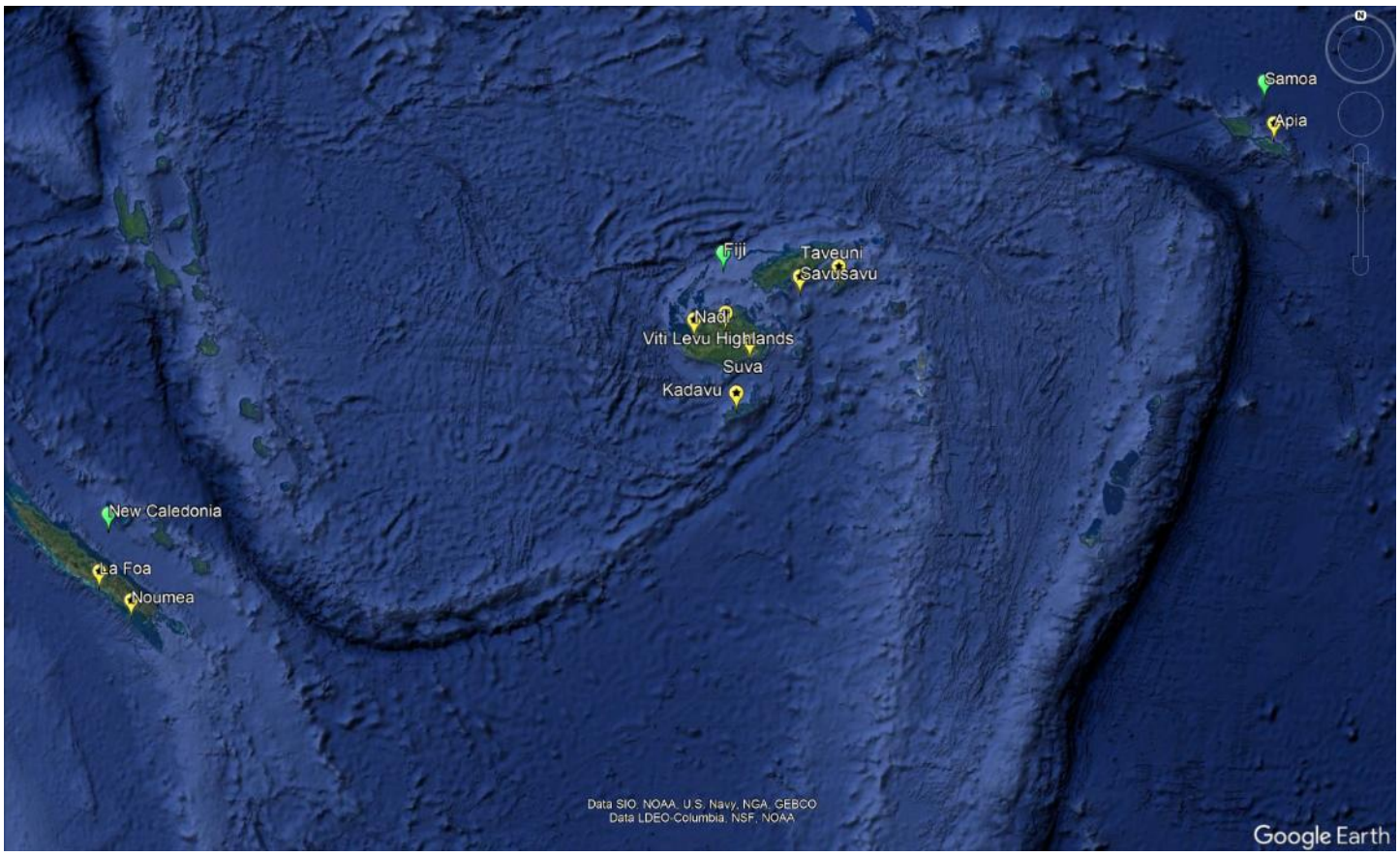
Itinerary & Map

Southwest Pacific Islands - Samoa & Fiji

Days 1 & 2	**Samoa**
Day 3	**Samoa; flight to Savusavu via Nadi**
Day 4	**Natewa Silktail quest**
Day 5	**Savusavu to Taveuni**
Day 6	**Taveuni**
Day 7	**Taveuni; flight to Kadavu via Nadi**
Day 8	**Kadavu**
Day 9	**Kadavu; flight to Suva via Nadi**
Days 10 & 11	**Viti Levu highlands**
Day 12	**Final departure**

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 & New Caledonian Thicketbird area to Noumea**
Day 4	**Riviere Bleu Reserve**
Day 5	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Many-colored Fruit Dove by David Hoddinott

Samoa. We'll explore the beautiful 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 may 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.

Savusavu. We make a short trip to the island of Vanua Levu to find the recently split Natewa Silktail. Whilst searching for our scare quarry, we should also find Barred Imperial Pigeon, Sulphur-breasted Myzomela, Fiji Whistler, Fiji Streaked Fantail and Vanikoro Flycatcher.

Taveuni. We can look forward to a beautful flight over exquisite turquoise seas, decorated with wonderfully untouched coral reefs. Our birding begins the moment we set down in Taveuni, as there may well be Pacific Golden Plovers and Fiji Woodswallows on the airstrip.

We'll drive along the volcanic coastline, passing through villages and coconut plantations looking for frigatebirds, Pacific Reef Heron and the handsome Fiji Goshawk. The environs of our lodge are home to several gorgeous birds and butterflies, including Collared Lory, Vanikoro Flycatcher, Sulphur-breasted Myzomela and Fiji White-eyes, whilst Black-naped and Great Crested Terns often patrol the beach. We'll explore a range of habitats near to our ldoge; from damp, misty, moss-adorned forests atop Des Voeux Peak (4,000 feet), to the humid lowlands.



Masked Shining Parrot by David Hoddinott

We have a large number of species to find here, so we must be in the forest by dawn in



Cloven-feathered Dove by David Hoddinott

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!

Kadavu. Kadavu is home to four species of bird 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.

Central highlands of Viti Levu. We'll 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.



Kadavu Fantail by David Hoddinott



Kagu by David Hoddinott

Noumea to La Foa. Departing Noumea, we'll head for La Foa keeping an eye out 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.

Park Des Grand Fougères. Initial birding through small fruit farms may yield Metallic Pigeon, New Caledonian Crow, Horned Parakeet and Buff-banded Rail. Once we reach the forest proper, 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 Thicketbird search. We'll spend our morning searching 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.

Riviere Bleu Reserve. 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 most 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. Our birding will largely focus on the Riviere Bleu Forest Reserve, which encompasses some of the best remaining lowland and hill forest on the island.



New Caledonian Crow by David Hoddinott

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



Goliath Pigeon by Erik Forsyth

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.

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: New Caledonian 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.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate to brisk paced tours suited for those in good health with good level of fitness. Not suited for anyone with mobility challenges or serious medical conditions. Opportunities for afternoon snorkelling on several days.
Birding Ease		Moderate to demanding. Several difficult target species.
Accommodation		Reasonable to very comfortable standard.
Walking / Trails		Easy to moderate. One or two difficult (optional) hikes/scrambles.
Vehicles / Roads		Minibuses, sedans & 4x4 (where necessary). Roads are variable in quality.
Photography		Worthwhile to good, tricky in the forests.
Annoyances		Many internal flights (mostly short). Hot & humid in the lowlands with rain showers.

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 lunch on day 1 to lunch on day 12 of the Samoa & Fiji tour;
- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 5 of the New Caledonia extension;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- Ferry & boat transportation as noted in the itinerary;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- 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;
- 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.

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 program as possible.**

- 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.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- Hotels are of reasonable to very comfortable 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 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 Kadavu.

The present tour schedule will almost certainly be adjusted due to inevitable flight changes. We do aim to maintain the published itinerary as closely as possible.

Arrival and Departure Details

The Samoa & Fiji tour will begin in Samoa on the morning of day 1. The tour will conclude on day 12, after lunch at Suva International Airport, Fiji.

The New Caledonia Extension departs from La Tontouta International Airport, Noumea 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.

Faleolo International Airport, Apia, Samoa (IATA: APW) is the main port of entry, and Nausori International Airport, Suva, Fiji (IATA: SUV) is the main port of departure for the Samoa & Fiji tour.

La Tontouta International Airport, Noumea, New Caledonia (IATA: NOU) is the main port of entry and departure for the New Caledonia extension.

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.