



PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGHLIGHTS & WEST NEW BRITAIN EXTENSION

June 5-20, 2027
June 20-25, 2027

New Guinea is the second largest island in the world after Greenland. This wild, sparsely inhabited and mystical land hosts more than 800 species of birds, the world's richest island avifauna, nearly half of which are found nowhere else on earth. While the extraordinary birds-of-



paradise are the finest jewels in New Guinea's crown, there is much else to attract the birder—huge, flightless cassowaries; strange mound building megapodes; a fantastic array of doves, parrots and kingfishers; exquisite fairywrens; and fascinating bowerbirds. Interesting mammals include little known marsupials like tree kangaroos and egg laying monotremes like the rare Long-beaked Echidna. In addition to some spectacular reptiles and amphibians, there is a plethora of moths and butterflies, including the spectacular Birdwings—the world's largest butterflies, and brilliant blue Ulysses Swallowtail. New Guinea will always remain a beacon to attract the natural history enthusiast, no matter what their interest, fascinated by the extraordinary diversity of life nurtured by rugged terrain and tropical climate.

This tour takes in a fabulous cross-section of habitats from flat lowland jungle and eucalyptus woodlands to dripping cloud forest, allowing us to encounter an excellent variety of birds. Birding is not easy in the giant rainforests that predominate, yet with patience and persistence, we will connect with some of the most exceptional birds on the face of the planet.

NOTE: Papua New Guinea is very special and one of the most exciting places to visit on earth.

However, the internal airline schedule can change frequently. This itinerary is subject to change, dependent on the existing internal air schedules, which may affect the order of the day-to-day activities. Please be assured that the focus of the tour will stay the same and you will still visit all the same areas. It is also important to realize that security can be an issue, and participants are advised not to go birding on their own and always follow the instructions of the leader.



We have a good chance of seeing the extravagant display of the famous Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise © Max Breckenridge

June 5-6, Days 1-2: Travel to Brisbane

Participants should arrange to depart the USA on or before June 5, cross the International Dateline and arrive in Brisbane no later than the early morning of June 8. Upon arrival and clearing customs, please make your way through the airport and connect with Qantas Flight 57, which is currently scheduled to depart at 9:05 a.m. and arrive in Port Moresby at 12:25 p.m. (subject to change). Please

note that it is necessary to present a copy of your electronic air ticket, which will be provided by the VENT office, to apply for your tourist visa in Port Moresby and board the plane.

Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting should consider arriving in Brisbane on or before June 7 and spending the night at the Ibis Brisbane Airport Hotel.

NIGHTS (June 5 & 6): In transit to Brisbane

NIGHT (June 7): Ibis Brisbane Airport Hotel, Brisbane

June 8, Day 3: Fly to Port Moresby

Upon arrival in Port Moresby, we'll be transferred to the fabulous Airways Hotel. If time allows, we will pay a visit to the Pacific Adventist University grounds to take in a cross-section of the local birds. We are likely to see Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Australasian Figbird, Helmeted Friarbird, Rufous-banded Honeyeater and with luck, maybe a Blue-winged Kookaburra or Forest Kingfisher.

NIGHT (June 8): Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

June 9, Day 4: Varirata National Park

As will be the case throughout much of the tour, we must rise early this morning for the hour-long drive to PNG's only national park. Varirata National Park is located at an elevation of 3,000 feet (900 m) within a mosaic of eucalypt savanna woodland and monsoon, moist tropical hill forest. These habitats host a wide range of species, including a number of very special but often extremely elusive endemics. Our birding will commence along a road that forms the ecotone between two major habitat types before we enter an excellent trail system within the relative cool of the wetter forest. With a little bit of luck, we may find the enormous Papuan Frogmouth or Barking Owl – both regularly roost in the main picnic area of the park. Listening to the calls of dawn songsters such as Piping Bellbird and Yellow-legged Brushturkey is a magical experience.

We will seek out a display tree of the fabulous Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise. Just hearing the frenetic calls of these birds displaying is enough to set our pulses racing. Seeing them in real life defies

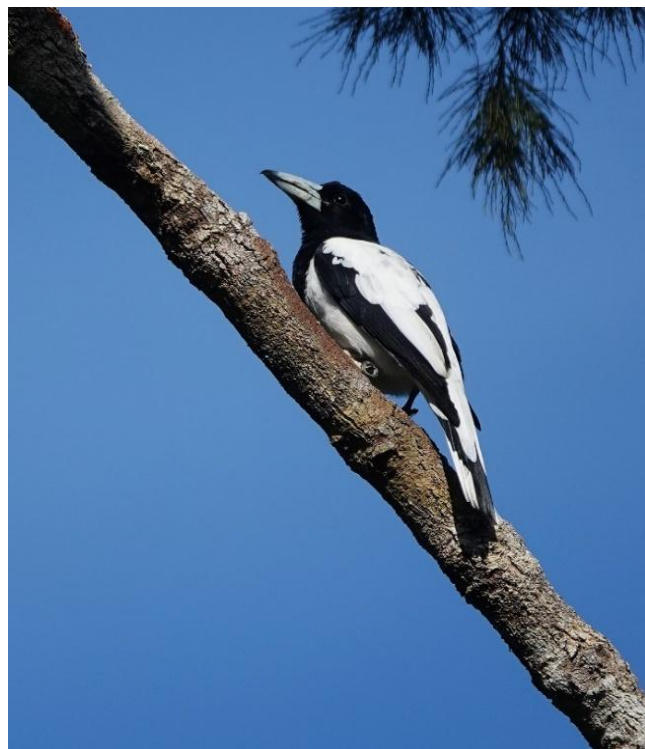
description. There is so much else to see here too: forest reptiles, giant birdwing butterflies, and some truly fabulous birds. Some of the species we may encounter here include Long-tailed Honey-buzzard; Yellow-legged Brushturkey (very vocal but tough to see); Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove; Wompoo, Beautiful, Pink-spotted and Orange-bellied fruit-doves; Zoe's and Purple-tailed imperial-pigeons; the gorgeous Black-capped Lory; Red-cheeked Parrot and Papuan Eclectus; Sahul Brush and Chestnut-breasted cuckoos; Pheasant Coucal; Glossy Swiftlet; Rufous-bellied and Blue-winged kookaburras; White-bellied, Boyer's, and Barred cuckooshrikes; Black Cicadabird; Rusty Mouse-Warbler (a delightful songster); Pale-billed Scrubwren; Green-backed and Yellow-bellied gerygones; Lemon-bellied and Olive flyrobin; White-faced Robin; Little Shrikethrush; Hooded Pitohui (the poison bird!); Black Berrypecker; Red-capped Flowerpecker; Black-fronted White-eye; Ruby-throated and Papuan Black myzomelas (especially if we find a flowering tree); Elegant, Plain, Tawny-breasted and Streak-headed honeyeaters; Brown Oriole; Spangled Drongo; Hooded Butcherbird; and Gray Crow. The perky, Yellow-billed Kingfisher and with a bit of luck, Azure and Papuan Dwarf kingfishers, are possible. We may also see the Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher—a gem, this is always a great bird to see, though not easy. Dwarf Cassowary is also a resident but is very wary and rarely encountered, so being quiet on the trails is ever helpful.

Varirata harbors an astonishing array of PNG's most alluring but elusive specialties, many of which are ground-birds. With a bit of luck, we should be able to lure a few of these species into view. Genuine skulkers include Pheasant Pigeon, Painted Quail-thrush, Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler, Papuan Scrub-Robin, Piping Bellbird and Ochre-breasted Catbird.



The Barred Owlet-Nightjar is one representative of a small family unique to Australasia and is sometimes encountered in Varirata NP
© Max Breckenridge

Mixed species flocks are very much a part of Varirata's ecology and the lovely song of the Yellow-bellied Gerygone should lead us to our first insectivore flock. These flocks contain such species as Fairy Gerygone; Chestnut-bellied Fantail; Black-faced, Spot-winged, and the very handsome Frilled monarchs; Yellow-breasted Boatbill; the dramatic sounding Goldenface; and notably dull Gray Whistler. The second flock type we may encounter is known as a "black-and-brown" flock because of the dominant colors of its members: Little Shrikethrush, Rusty and Hooded pitohuis, Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise, Growling Riflebird and Crinkle-collared Manucode.



Hooded Butcherbird © Max Breckenridge

NIGHT: Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

June 10, Day 5: Fly Port Moresby to Kiunga

This morning, we will fly west and northward to the frontier township of Kiunga, located on the north bank of the mighty Fly River. Our route flies over a vast wilderness of pristine woodlands before giving way to the third largest remaining area of lowland rainforest on our planet (after the Amazon of South America and Ituri Forest of Central Africa). The sight of such an enormous, rarely explored, and still pristine forest wilderness extending out to the horizon cannot help but add to the allure of our next destination. Although located within a frontier township, the Kiunga Guest House provides us with comfortable, air-conditioned accommodations in addition to generous, tasty, home-cooked meals. From here we will venture out along the main Kiunga-Tabubil Road and associate side roads and trails into the forest. We will also take an extensive boat trip along the Fly River and its tributaries, the Elevara and Ketu.

NIGHT: Kiunga Guest House, Kiunga

June 11-12, Days 6-7: Fly River & Kiunga

We have visited the lowland forests of the Kiunga area almost every year since 1986. Each year, new and exciting, little-known species have been added to the list of species for this area. There is a chance for the poorly known Little Paradise-Kingfisher, retiring Doria's Goshawk, enigmatic Forest Bittern or perhaps we will find that most elusive of species, the Campbell's Fairywren.

Some of the species we hope to encounter include Pacific Baza; Long-tailed Honey-buzzard; Gray-headed and Variable goshawks; Yellow-legged Brushturkey (typically heard only); Pinon's and Collared imperial-pigeons; Papuan Mountain Pigeon; Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove; Yellow-streaked and the handsome Black-capped lorries; Palm Cockatoo (a truly magnificent giant); both Dusky-cheeked and Double-eyed fig-parrots; Papuan Eclectus; possibly the endangered and impressive Pesquet's (Vulturine) Parrot; White-crowned and Dwarf koels; Greater and Lesser Black coucals; Moustached Treeswift; Rufous-bellied Kookaburra; Blyth's Hornbill (still common here); with a fair bit of luck, both Papuan and Eastern Hooded pittas; Gray-headed and the fabulous Golden cuckooshrikes; possibly the extremely elusive Painted Quail-thrush; Spot-winged, the uncommon Hooded and brilliant Golden monarchs; Black-sided Robin; Southern Variable, Rusty, and the localized White-bellied pitohuis; Long-billed Honeyeater; and Yellow-bellied Longbill. On previous tours we enjoyed superb views of the rarely seen Gurney's Eagle, Large Fig-Parrot, Hook-billed Kingfisher and Blue Jewel-babbler. One of the major prizes of these forests, the Sclater's Crowned Pigeon, is the world's largest species of pigeon. Recently the once good populations have begun to decline, although we still have a very good hit-rate when it comes to finding this exceptional species. We should see a veritable rainbow of fruit-doves including Wompoo, Pink-spotted, Orange-fronted, Beautiful, Orange-bellied, and Dwarf. Cuckoos include Sahul Brush, Chestnut-breasted, and the rare and little-known Long-billed Cuckoo, which we have seen on several visits to Kiunga. Kingfishers include Common Paradise-Kingfisher, Azure, Papuan Dwarf, and the frustratingly vocal but difficult to see Hook-billed Kingfisher. With a bit of luck, we could see White-bellied and Sooty thicket-fantails, in addition to the songful Rufous-backed Fantail. The scarce Great-billed Heron is occasionally seen along the Elevara River. We may also see the rather uncommon Wallace's Fairywren as well as the truly beautiful cobalt-blue Emperor Fairywren. In recent years we have had luck encountering the once mythical Campbell's Fairywren as well.



The breathtaking male Flame Bowerbird is always a possibility around Kiunga © Max Breckenridge

If we can find an appropriate flowering tree, we should see a nice selection of honeyeaters including several myzomelas and meliphagas. Typically, they will be busily competing with the shy Meyer's Friarbird and Plain, Streak-headed and the elusive Obscure honeyeaters. Other species we will be looking for include White-spotted Munia, a rather nomadic species; possibly the poorly known, Yellow-eyed Starling; Golden and Yellow-faced mynas; and the dapper Lowland Peltops. Flame Bowerbird is one of the area's most sought after species. Previous tours we have been treated to several sensational views of this spectacular bird, but it remains an overall elusive species.

Then there are birds-of-paradise. Glossy-mantled and Trumpet manucodes are both common but can take some work to see well. We have a chance to see the dawn display sequence of the Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise. King Bird-of-paradise is an unbelievable gem—the intensity of its calls and its red color must be witnessed to be believed and again we should be able to view one at its display tree. We will also hear and with some luck see the distinctive sounding Magnificent Riflebird or the regal Greater Bird-of-paradise – a species which is under severe hunting pressure for its elaborate feathers.

NIGHTS: Kiunga Guest House, Kiunga



The amazing Sclater's Crowned Pigeon is a chance along the rivers near Kiunga
© Dion Hobcroft

June 13, Day 8: Fly to Ambua Lodge

With our stay in the lowlands ending this morning, we will take a charter flight into the mountains, directly to Tari which is half an hour's drive from the wonderful Ambua Lodge. It will be like arriving in another country!

Without doubt, Ambua Lodge is one of the most comfortable lodges located in the highlands of New Guinea. Built at 6,800 feet and tucked away in the folds of beautiful moss-forested slopes, it presents us with the opportunity to see as many as 10 species of birds-of-paradise in addition to many other wonderful and very special montane species of birds. From your bedroom window, it is possible to watch Stephanie's *Astrapia* and Greater *Lophorina* or sit entranced at the luncheon table as a Great Woodswallows snatch insects from the forest edge. For three nights and two full days we will treat ourselves to this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

NIGHT: Ambua Lodge, Tari Valley

June 14, Day 9: Ambua Lodge

During our time based at Ambua Lodge, we will cover a wide range of elevation, terrain, and habitats. We will explore the alpine grassland of the Tari Gap at 9,200 feet and follow narrow but exquisitely constructed trails within a fairy-tale environment of gnarled, moss-festooned trees, liberally decorated with orchids, lichens, and some really beautiful fungi. Here we may encounter some of the highland's most desirable birds such as the gigantic New Guinea Eagle, Black-mantled Goshawk, Great Cuckoo-Dove, White-breasted Fruit-Dove, the rare



The male Stephanie's Astrapia is a prized sighting at Ambua Lodge. © Dion Hobcroft

Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon, and displaying Papuan Mountain-Pigeons. Lorikeets include Fairy, Stella's, Plum-faced, Yellow-billed, and Orange-billed—all of them gems.

With luck we may find the engaging Garnet, Black-throated, White-winged and Blue-gray robins, as well as Lesser Ground-Robin. Whistlers are diverse here and include Sclater's, Regent, Brown-backed and Black-headed. The monotypic Mottled Berryhunter is often heard singing its beautiful song here and is occasionally seen. Other taxonomic-oddities, such as the poisonous Blue-capped Ifrita, Rufous-naped Bellbird, Lesser Melampitta, and even Wattled Ploughbill are good chances in the tracts of forest that remain here.

Other birds we may encounter include four species of rather retiring tiger-parrots; Papuan King-Parrot; Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Rufous-throated Bronze-Cuckoo; Papuan Boobook; Mountain Swiftlet; Mountain Kingfisher; Hooded Cuckooshrike and Black-bellied Cicadabird; Long-tailed Shrike; Pied Bushchat; Papuan Island Thrush; Papuan Logrunner (shy); Island Leaf-Warbler; White-shouldered and perhaps Orange-crowned fairywren; Mountain Mouse-Warbler; three species of diminutive scrubwrens; the songful Brown-breasted Gerygone; Gray Thornbill; Dimorphic, Friendly and Black fantails; the very handsome Black-breasted Boatbill; Canary Flyrobin; Black Pitohui; Papuan and Black

sittellas; Mid-mountain and Fan-tailed berrypeckers; Capped and New Guinea white-eyes; Hooded Munia; Mountain Firetail; Mountain Peltops; Great Woodswallow; Black Butcherbird; and with luck, the elusive Archbold's and MacGregor's bowerbirds.



Plum-faced Lorikeet © Max Breckenridge

It is the birds-of-paradise that hold sway in the vastness of the montane forests and with a bit of luck we should be treated to lengthy studies of such unbelievable species as Brown Sicklebill, the sound of its “machine-gun” advertising call is impressive; Stephanie’s Astrapia; the gorgeous Ribbon-tailed Astrapia; the truly extraordinary King-of-Saxony; the lovely Greater Lophorina and Lawe’s Parotia; and the peculiar Short-tailed Paradigalla. Two further endemic New Guinea bird families are represented in Tari by the Satinbirds (Loria’s and Crested) and the Painted Berrypeckers (Eastern Crested and Tit). We have a chance to see some and hopefully all of these.

NIGHT: Ambua Lodge, Tari Valley

June 15, Day 10: Fly to Mt. Hagen; Drive to Rondon Ridge Lodge

This morning, we will take a special charter flight to Mt. Hagen, the main town of the anthropologically famous Waghi Valley. This huge valley in the heart of PNG’s central cordillera supports a relatively large population of people that were completely unknown to the outside world until 1933 when a Kiap patrol and prospecting group stumbled upon them. From Mt. Hagen township, we will drive a short distance into the hills overlooking Mt Hagen to the beautifully located Rondon Ridge Lodge. At just over 7,000 feet, this fantastically appointed lodge is situated at a perfect altitude

where mornings and evenings can be cool, but very pleasant to warm during the middle of the day. The average temperature in Mt. Hagen in July for a typical day range from a high of 70°F (21°C) to a low of 57°F (14°C).

NIGHT: Rondon Ridge Lodge, Mt. Hagen

June 16-18, Days 11-13: Rondon Ridge Lodge

Rondon Ridge Lodge is arguably the most well-appointed lodge in the highlands of PNG. Set right on the edge of New Guinea's upper montane forest, yet with all modern comforts, spacious rooms and great food. We will spend three very enjoyable days here, exploring the grounds of the lodge, adjacent trails, as well as various locations nearby. Some of the birds we may encounter around Rondon Ridge Lodge itself include Ornate and Yellow-browed Melidectes - large, vocal honeyeaters; tiny Elfin Myzomela and Mountain Meliphaga; White-shouldered Fairywren; Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove; Greater Lophorina, and perhaps even Blue Bird-of-Paradise.

From the lodge itself, we will venture out early one morning to bird Rondon Ridge itself. It is a fairly long, gradual walk uphill, but once we reach the ridge the walking becomes much easier and the birding certainly makes it worthwhile. Several of New Guinea's endemic families are possible here, including Wattled Ploughbill, Mottled Berryhunter, Lesser Melampitta, and Blue-capped Ifrita. As well as these, we hope to encounter



The amazing Stella's Lorikeet © Dion Hobcroft

some of the following species: MacGregor's Bowerbird, Black Pitohui, Black Sicklebill, Orange-crowned Fairywren; alien-like King-of-Saxony Bird-of-Paradise; Stephanie's Astrapia, Rufous-backed and the rare, Yellow-streaked Honeyeaters; Black-breasted Boatbill; several species of lorikeet, and possible, Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot.

On one day, we will visit Kumul Lodge, the only place in New Guinea where there is a regularly provisioned bird feeder. The scene on our arrival at Kumul Lodge can quite simply be astonishing. So many weird, wonderful and exotic birds attend the feeder that we will find it difficult to drag ourselves

away for several hours. The photographic opportunities are fabulous! We should see the spell-binding white tail plumes of the Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, the spectacular Brown Sicklebill, not to mention several very demonstrative species such as the gigantic yodeling Belford's Melidectes, and excitable Smoky Honeyeater. Also present are Brehm's Tiger-Parrot; Papuan Island Thrush; White-winged Robin; cute Fan-tailed Berrypecker; and occasionally Rufous-naped Bellbird or the stunning Stella's Lorikeet.



A male Ribbon-tailed Astrapia glows in the dark forest . © Dion Hobcroft

One of the more recent birding offerings in the Mt Hagen area now has been the creation of several local hides and feeders where certain species of bird-of-paradise visit (and sometimes even display). We will have one day set aside to visit whichever feeders are yielding the best offerings at the time of our visit. Possibilities include close views of Blue Bird-of-Paradise; Lawe's Parotia; Stephanie's Astrapia; Black Sicklebill; Short-tailed Paradigalla; or Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise.

At night it is possible to search for Mountain Owlet-Nightjar and Papuan Boobook. Over the years we have also sighted a few mammals including Speckled Dasyure, Black-tailed Antechinus, Raffray's Bandicoot, Calaby's Pademelon, Black-tailed Giant-Rat, Pygmy and Masked ringtails plus Silky Cuscus.

NIGHTS: Rondon Ridge Lodge, Mt. Hagen

June 19, Day 14: Flight from Mt. Hagen to Port Moresby

After some final birding, we will return to Mt. Hagen in time to catch our commercial flight to Port Moresby, where we will enjoy dinner and spend the night.

NIGHT: Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

June 20, Day 15: Begin West New Britain Extension or Fly from Port Moresby to Brisbane; Departures for Home

Participants not continuing on the West New Britain Extension can fly to Brisbane on Qantas Flight 58 (currently scheduled to depart at 1:15 p.m. and arrive at 4:20 p.m.) for onward connections.

Participants wanting to spend additional time in Australia and/or avoid the risk of misconnecting should consider spending the night in Brisbane or Sydney and departing for home on or after June 21. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.



The superb Eastern Crested Berrypecker representative of a New Guinea endemic bird family © Dion Hobcroft

WEST NEW BRITAIN EXTENSION

June 20-25, 2027



A pair of Island Imperial-Pigeons - set against a turquoise blue ocean in New Britain. © Dion Hobcroft

New Britain is the largest of the Melanesian islands in the Bismarck Archipelago. It has a unique bird fauna, reflecting the fact that it has never been in contact with mainland New Guinea, allowing colonizing species to evolve in isolation. It is a superb coral fringed, forest-covered island dominated by volcanoes, some of which are active. The forests support an amazing biomass of birds, many spectacular, raucous and conspicuous. It will be impossible to miss such species as the Brahminy Kite, Blue-eyed Cockatoo, Papuan Eclectus, Blyth's Hornbill and Purple-bellied Lory.

Other special birds we may see include Melanesian Megapode; Blue-breasted Quail; Spotted Whistling-Duck; Black Bittern; White-browed Crake; Pacific Baza; Variable Goshawk; Pale-vented Bush-hen; Stephan's Dove; Knob-billed and Superb fruit-doves; Red-knobbed, Finsch's, Yellowish and Bismarck imperial-pigeons; Violaceous and Pied coucals; New Britain Boobook; Moustached Treeswift; New Britain Dwarf-Kingfisher and New Britain Kingfisher; Black-capped Paradise-Kingfisher; Red-flanked Lorikeet; Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrot; Bismarck Pitta; New Britain Friarbird; Ashy Myzomela; Black-bellied Myzomela; Bismarck Monarch; Shining and Velvet flycatchers; Long-tailed Myna; Bismarck Crow; Black and Sahul sunbirds; Red-banded Flowerpecker; and Bismarck Munia.

An excursion to small islands in Kimbe Bay allows access to another suite of special birds—the so-called “supertramps” that cannot find a niche on the large islands but do well on tiny satellite islands. This includes the unusual Nicobar Pigeon, Island Imperial-Pigeon, Spot-breasted Cuckoo-Dove, Beach Kingfisher, Island Monarch, Black-tailed Whistler and Sclater’s Myzomela. We will also have an opportunity to do some snorkeling on the beautiful tropical coral reefs with an abundance and diversity of reef fish.

More widely distributed species include Pacific Black Duck; Little Pied Cormorant; Nankeen Night-Heron; Pacific Reef-Heron; Black-naped Tern; Lesser Frigatebird; Australasian Swamphen; Buff-banded Rail; White-bellied Sea-Eagle; Sahul Brush Cuckoo; Sacred, Melanesian and Common kingfishers; Rainbow Bee-eater; Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove; Uniform and White-rumped swiftlets; Pacific Swallow; White-bellied Cuckooshrike; Bismarck Cicadabird; Spangled Drongo; Metallic and Singing starlings; Willie Wagtail; and Northern Fantail.

Rare birds we sometimes encounter luck encountering include Beach Thick-knee, Pied Cuckoo-Dove, Bronze Ground-Dove, Golden Masked-Owl, Bismarck Kingfisher, Oriental Hobby, Singing Parrot, Green-fronted Hanging-Parrot or the enigmatic Bismarck Woodswallow. Throw in some migrant shorebirds and tropical terns and you can see an impressive range of birds in New Britain in real comfort at Walindi Plantation Resort, one of the most delightfully appointed dive resorts to be found anywhere in the world. Our carefully devised itinerary will give you the finest opportunity to see an excellent cross-section of New Britain’s birdlife with all the comforts and trappings of civilization.



June 20, Day 1: Flight to Hoskins in West New Britain

Today we will fly from Port Moresby and wing our way out across the sea to New Britain, the second largest island in the Southwest Pacific after New Guinea. This fascinating, lovely tropical island supports a rich and distinctive fauna and flora, and we should begin seeing some of these birds the moment we step off the aircraft at Hoskins airport. Despite our drive along the north coast of West New Britain taking us mainly through oil palm plantations, remnant patches of secondary forest still hold a few species of interest such as Brahminy Kite, raucous Blue-eyed Cockatoos, Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeon and Uniform Swiftlet. It is a one-hour drive to our excellent accommodation at Walindi Plantation Resort.

Originally set up as a coconut plantation, Walindi is now one of the finest dive resorts in the Southwest Pacific. After lunch we will commence our exploration of this island's fascinating birdlife by exploring the beautifully tended gardens of the lodge which provide habitat for a good number of species.

NIGHT: Walindi Plantation Resort, West New Britain



The Black-capped Paradise-Kingfisher is endemic to New Britain © Max Breckenridge

June 21-23, Days 2-4: West New Britain

During our time in New Britain, we will concentrate our attention on the magnificent, tall lowland and hill forests of the island's north coastal plain. All the lowland and foothill species recorded from New Britain, including several very special endemics, can be found in the forests of the nearby Garu Wildlife Management Area. Much of our time will be spent birding here along forested roads and tracks. However, as the day warms up, we will enter the forest along narrow, shady trails to look for some of the island's more secretive species. Birds we may encounter include Melanesian Megapode; Black Honey-buzzard (rare); Variable Goshawk; Oriental Hobby; New Britain Rail (secretive deep forest inhabitant); Knob-billed and Superb fruit-doves; Red-knobbed, Finsch's, Yellowish and Bismarck imperial-pigeons; Amboyna and Cuckoo-dove; Stephan's Dove; Purple-bellied Lory (a spectacular parrot, the strange donkey-like braying call is often the first indication of its presence); Red-flanked Lorikeet; Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrot; Blue-eyed Cockatoo (a raucous endemic); Papuan Eclectus; Singing Parrot; Channel-billed Cuckoo; Pacific Koel; the weird, endemic Violaceous and Pied coucals; New Britain Boobook; perhaps if we are very lucky, the gorgeous Golden Masked-Owl; White-rumped Swiftlet; Common, New Britain Dwarf-, New Britain, Sacred and Melanesian kingfishers; Black-capped Paradise-Kingfisher; Dollarbird and Rainbow Bee-eater; Blyth's Hornbill; Pacific Swallow; Bismarck Pitta (a great skulker like all members of its family); Bismarck Cicadabird and White-bellied Cuckooshrike; Northern Fantail and Willie Wagtail; Spangled Drongo; Black-tailed Monarch; Velvet and Shining flycatchers; Red-banded Flowerpecker; Black and Sahul sunbird; New Britain Friarbird; Ashy Myzomela; the gorgeous Black-bellied Myzomela; Long-tailed Myna; Metallic Starling; Bismarck Crow; and the localized Bismarck Munia.

A visit to a nearby cattle ranch has turned up some interesting birds on recent visits including Blue-breasted (King) Quail, White-browed Crake, Buff-banded Rail, Yellow Bittern, Golden-headed Cisticola, Australian Reed-Warbler, Papuan Grassbird and Tree Martin.

On one morning during our four-night stay, we will take a boat out into Kimbe Bay and visit several tiny, forested islands for a suite of different species that can include White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Osprey, the strange Nicobar Pigeon, Island Imperial-Pigeon, Spot-breasted Cuckoo-Dove, beautiful Beach Kingfisher, Island Monarch (scarce), Black-tailed (Mangrove Golden) Whistler and Sclater's Myzomela. Possible seabirds include Brown Booby, Lesser Frigatebird, Black Noddy, and Black-naped, Bridled,

Common and Crested terns. We will visit Restorf and Malumalu Islands (seas permitting), where we will be able to examine close-up one of the most beautiful and diverse coral reefs on our planet – undoubtedly some of the best snorkeling anywhere in the world.

NIGHTS: Walindi Plantation Resort, West New Britain



Walindi Plantation Resort lodgings © Max Breckenridge

June 24, Day 5: Flight from Hoskins to Port Moresby

Today after some final birding around the lodge or just soaking up the end of our time in the tropics, we will fly back to Port Moresby where we'll enjoy a farewell dinner and spend the night.

NIGHT: Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

June 25, Day 6: Fly from Port Moresby to Brisbane or Cairns; Departures for Home

Participants have a choice between flying to Brisbane on Qantas Flight 58 (currently scheduled to depart at 1:25 p.m. and arrive at 4:30 p.m.) or Sydney on Qantas Flight 204 (currently scheduled to depart at 1:25 p.m. and arrive at 5:25 p.m.). These will enable a connection with flights to various

destinations. Please inform the VENT office of your preference between Sydney and Brisbane no later than January 4, 2027 (see **AIR INFORMATION** section below).

Participants wanting to spend additional time in Australia and/or avoid the risk of misconnecting should consider spending the night in Brisbane or Sydney and departing for home on or after June 26. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: The main tour and pre-trip will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Max Breckenridge



Max Breckenridge was born in the UK, but has lived virtually his entire life in Sydney, Australia. At age 12, his passion for birds was fostered when his parents took him and his brother out of school for 10 weeks to travel across Australia. After completing high school in Sydney, Max drove solo from Darwin to Broome, birding all the way, and spent the next month volunteering at the world-renowned Broome Bird Observatory. Max completed a Bachelor of Biodiversity & Conservation at Macquarie University

in 2018. Max has birded across every state and almost every corner of the Australian landmass. He has an excellent eye, and especially ear, for Australian birds. Some of his birding exploits in Australia include two separate trips to the remote rainforests of Iron Range National Park on Queensland's Cape York (including a fly-in-fly-out trip during the middle of the wet season where he spent two weeks under a tarp in order to see some of the key migrants from Papua New Guinea). Max is at home birding in the Old World and has spent the last decade covering as much of it as possible. He is incredibly passionate about wildlife conservation. In addition to guiding, he has spent much of his spare time working for BirdLife Australia, monitoring and researching the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater - including working on several captive-releases of zoo-bred individuals. Max receives immense pleasure from birding and showing birds to others. He is currently living on Lake Macquarie, north of Sydney, with his partner Fernanda.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$16,325 per person based on double occupancy or \$17,985 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 3 through dinner on Day 15, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is \$1,000 per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

TOUR FEE (West New Britain Extension): The fee for the West New Britain Extension is \$5,220 per person based on double occupancy or \$4,860 based on single occupancy and will include all meals from breakfast on Day 1 through dinner on Day 6, lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground and water transportation, the commercial flights between Port Moresby and Hoskins, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee does not include airfare between your home and Port Moresby (flights between Brisbane and Port Moresby are included with the Papua New Guinea fee; see above), airport departure taxes, special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: When comparing trip costs with other tour companies, please consider that our tour fees include the flights between Brisbane and Port Moresby, and all internal air within Papua New Guinea, including charter flights that save a lot of time and avoid day-long drives through areas with some security risks. This represents considerable savings as it includes several flights and a good deal of additional expense if you were to pay it separately.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date. (March 13, 2026, for the main tour; March 28, 2026, for the extension).

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant with a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement.

A ***“Force Majeure”*** event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h)

shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain travel sellers to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: These tours visit remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on these tours.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a Coronavirus FAQ page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/ **About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan**

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural

disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

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About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: All tour participants are asked to limit their baggage as closely as possible to **thirty-five pounds per person**. While we recognize this is not easy (especially if you carry a spotting scope—**which we strongly encourage you to do if it is important to you**), it is equally important that participants are aware that there are absolute limitations on the total weight the charter aircraft flight between Kiunga and Tari, and Tari and Mt. Hagen, is physically able to lift off the ground. If we exceed those weight limitations, some of the baggage will have to be jettisoned and arrangements made to have that baggage sent on to the next destination as soon as possible, **but this may not be possible**.

VENT will likely be asked to provide the charter flight operators with each participant's body weight before we arrive, and this can sometimes lift the baggage allowance possible.

Ideally, everything should be packed within suitcases that will fit easily into the small-to-medium aircraft we will be using in Papua New Guinea. However, **while we do encourage you to travel as lightly as possible, you should not do so to the point of discomfort or inconvenience. For example, it is better to bring your scope with you rather than leave it behind. In general, we do not encounter too many difficulties. This is greatly helped by the availability of inexpensive 24-hour laundry services at most of the places we stay** and the helpfulness and understanding nature of VENT's wonderful clients. Please note it is also possible to store excess items in the Airways Hotel for a small fee.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Port Moresby and a visa for Papua New Guinea and Australia are required for United States citizens. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate or embassy for instructions.

VISAs: All international arrivals into PNG must apply for an **Easy Visitor Permit** (30 or 60 days) online before their scheduled arrival (<https://evisa.ica.gov.pg/evisa/account/Apply>) You will be required to upload several documents. It is advisable to apply for this permit **at least two months prior to departure** to receive it on time. The time taken to process requests can be highly variable. Visa arrangements are prone to change with these details valid as of September 2026. The VENT office has a visa service which all participants can use. Travel Document Systems: <https://www.traveldocs.com/> Phone: 800-874-5100.

A **MULTIPLE ENTRY Australian tourist visa** is required for all participants. An Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) are required for citizens of most countries including the USA and Canada. Please use the link below to initiate the application process:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/electronic-travel-authority-601>

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Lightweight field clothing is recommended for the lowlands, preferably in muted, drab colors, **NOT bright white, yellow or red**. Dark, muted colors help prevent startling the birds, especially

when we are in the forests. This includes several pairs of pants and cool, comfortable shirts. Long-sleeved shirts, a hat, and sunglasses are recommended for protection from the sun and mosquitoes. Long socks are very useful, so that you can tuck your pants in and further avoid biting insects. A warm sweater, warm hat and thin gloves are essential for the highlands. **Raingear and an umbrella** are also essential, including waterproof pants which are very useful in case we encounter rain while in a boat. Dress will be casual.

FOOTWEAR: There will be a few really rigorous walks; we may well encounter some mud, slippery surfaces, uphill and uneven terrain and tree roots. Add to that the fact that you are on your feet for much of the day and it is **most important** that you provide suitable protection and support for your feet and ankles. Lightweight (Gore-Tex or some similar material) but strong boots (hiking boots) that come up to the ankle and have a good lug-sole are ideal. Many people are apprehensive that these will be too heavy; this is not true. The protection, grip, and day-long comfort such boots afford is far superior to the seemingly comfortable sneakers/training shoes. If you like using a walking stick you should always bring it along every day.

A perennial issue is rubber boots; we recommend bringing a pair as they are often extremely useful at Kiunga where mud is abundant, especially if the river level is low. As the river level fluctuates a lot, we never know until we get there. Sometimes these can be purchased in Kiunga but they generally do not have large shoe sizes or are sometimes sold out or closed if we arrive on a weekend! You can bring an inexpensive pair on the commercial flight and if you like, leave them behind in Kiunga where we have our charter flight, which is more weight restrictive. All rubber boot donations are well accepted by the local people in Kiunga!

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, camera, etc.). Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have a spotting scope and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. We will be birding from roadsides or open trails for much of the time, and a scope can be very useful for seeing such treetop birds as the birds-of-paradise. Other items to bring include a flashlight or headlamp, camera, extra batteries, water bottle, handy wipes, wash cloth, insect repellent, towel and umbrella (the latter is very useful and should be carried at all times). You should also have a supply of personal medication such as aspirin, a good cortisone cream, etc. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars,

a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

Note: Some participants have found hiking pole/s to be very useful on these trips, especially as some trails can be muddy or uneven. These poles are often very lightweight and easily packable.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: During the tour you will experience a wide range of temperatures and climate, from the 70s and high 80s in the lowlands (where it is also humid), to the 40s and 50s at higher elevations. We will almost certainly encounter some rain, possibly heavy. On West New Britain, the temperature rarely fluctuates more or less than 74-84 degrees.

CONDITIONS: The Papua New Guinea Highlights tour has been described as one of VENT's "more-demanding" trips. This is likely due to a combination of factors that can include several travel days, occasionally uncomfortable transportation (e.g. vehicles without air conditioning, tired suspension), a variety of weather conditions and temperatures, some effects of altitude, shy birds requiring patience and some neck-straining, some difficult walking conditions, biting insects in places, and some more basic meal options at times. With all that being said, this is still one of our most popular tours and has been enjoyed by a wide variety of participants over many decades. Logistics in PNG can be complicated and do not always run smoothly, which requires participants to have some flexibility and understanding. The reality is that PNG is a poor country, with very few good roads, limited infrastructure and few reliable local tour operators.

Most of our birding will begin early, usually departing our accommodation around 5:30-6:30AM, and returning for lunch. On at least two occasions, we will take packed lunches with us and return in the afternoon. There will always be at least 45-60 minutes before evening list sessions and dinner. Birding will often take a break for several hours during the heat of the day or rainy periods. Birding in Papua

New Guinea is not easy. Due to continued hunting pressure over 40,000 years, many species are shy and unconfiding due to the likelihood that they may end up as dinner for someone or part of a traditional headdress. As such, some pigeons, brush turkeys, and birds-of-paradise in particular, can require some patience and luck to see. Despite these challenges, we will have numerous opportunities for excellent views of a wide variety of wonderful birds, including a large number of birds-of-paradise, and colorful pigeons.

Walking on the tour is primarily along even or downhill sections of gravel or tarred roads. At other times, we will be birding along forest trails. These are rarely steep or uphill for long periods but often involve roots and sometimes logs across them. These trails can also be muddy or slippery at times. During our time around Kiunga, there can be several outings that involve walking through thick mud in humid rainforest conditions. Your leader will always provide information the evening before as to the walking conditions you are likely to experience the following day.

Travel will typically be on 18-seater Toyota Coaster buses or smaller 11-seater Toyota Hi-ace vans. On one or two occasions, we may need to split between two 8-seater Toyota Landcruiser 4WD's.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: Your trip to Papua New Guinea includes all necessary expenses. You may want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as gifts, alcohol, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. Exchange facilities are available through trade banks and at the airports in Brisbane and Port Moresby. Visa/MasterCard are the most widely accepted credit cards. Our leaders typically change their money at the airport in Port Moresby as it is difficult to do once we leave this location.

The official currency of Papua New Guinea is the Papua New Guinean Kina (PGK). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting “XE-The World’s Favorite Currency Site.”

Should you extend your vacation in Papua New Guinea beyond what is offered in the program, you’ll want to obtain local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in Papua New Guinea is 220 volts, 50 cycles. Electrical outlets are “Type I” (Australia).

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-Fi is available at the Airways Hotel in Port Moresby and Walindi Plantation Resort. At Kiunga Guest House and Rondon Ridge Lodge limited WiFi connectivity is available in the **lounge area**. No internet is available at Ambua Lodge as of July 2026. Your leader will be able to provide a wifi hotspot at times. **Note:** There is surprisingly good cell coverage across the majority of locations we visit in PNG. Purchasing a local SIM card or using an eSIM is often the best (and cheapest) way to maintain a reliable connection to the internet.

LANGUAGE: Melanesian Pidgin is the primary language spoken in Papua New Guinea, but English is spoken by some locals, and by staff at all lodges and hotels.

TIME ZONE: Papua New Guinea is in the Papua New Guinea Standard Time Zone and is 14 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Brisbane (Australia) is also within the time zone as Papua New Guinea.

PHOTOGRAPHY: As with anywhere in the tropics, especially inside the forest, photography, especially of birds, is never easy. However, there will be some very worthwhile opportunities such as at the Pacific Adventist University ponds, along roadsides within the forest and especially at the fantastic bird feeder at Kumul Lodge.

BIRDING ETIQUETTE: To make the tour most enjoyable for yourself, other participants, and your leader, it is important to use common sense and show proper etiquette while in the field. Birds tend to be shy. Loud noises and bright colors can scare them. We encourage clothing with earth tones. Try to avoid colors like oranges, yellows, and reds. Always keep your voice down. Shouting is not conducive to extended looks at a given species. When looking through the spotting scope, always wait your turn and look briefly the first time so that others may have the opportunity to get a look. If you are a smoker, please do so at a distance.

ACCOMMODATION NOTES: *Airways Hotel, Port Moresby:* Modern, comfortable hotel with laundry service and internet in rooms. In house restaurant with excellent buffet and a la carte menu. Purchases can be made by card.

Kiunga Guest House: Older, but comfortable air-conditioned accommodations. Laundry service available. Intermittent internet is available in the office, and the breezeway near the office. Charges can be paid by credit card (if there are no telecommunications issues), or PNG, US, or Australian Cash.

Ambua Lodge: Modern, comfortable accommodation with laundry service available, but no wifi. Purchases can be made by card.

Rondon Ridge Lodge: Probably the nicest accommodation in the highlands of PNG with expansive and comfortable private rooms. In house restaurant, laundry services are available, and wifi in the lobby. Purchases can be made by card.

The bungalows at *Walindi Plantation Resort* are free-standing 'bure' style accommodation, with ensuite bathroom, ceiling fans (no air-conditioning), tea and coffee making facilities, small fridge, closet, work desk and a private verandah. Free laundry service. Wi-fi is at the main resort building.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: Sanitary conditions in most restaurants and hotels in Papua New Guinea are up to Western standards. Virtually all hot, freshly cooked food should be safe; but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, make sure meat is cooked thoroughly, and assume the water is unsafe unless informed otherwise by your leader. Hepatitis A and typhoid immunizations are recommended for Papua New Guinea. Malaria is present in Papua New Guinea but as yet it is not a serious problem. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. Participants need to be in good physical condition.

VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus

vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up to date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over the counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

BITING INSECTS: Chiggers, mosquitoes, leeches, and other insects can be a problem in PNG, particularly in the lowlands. It is recommended to always carry insect repellent with you.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize

because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin):** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for *pre-treatment* of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires several hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur – **primarily around Kiunga**. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy and muddy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies

respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking or standing in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing. Please refer to the Insect Repellent section that follows for important information about selecting and applying repellent.
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings. If using sulfur, never touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands first.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Specifically for the Asia/Pacific region, we recommend this website for books that are difficult to find or out of print, <http://www.andrewisles.com/AndrewIsles/>.

FIELD GUIDES:

Coates, B.J. & W. Peckover. Alderley, Brisbane: Dove Publications, 2001. *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of New Guinea*. An excellent guide which nicely supplements the field guide also covering New Britain.

Dutson G. *Birds of Melanesia*. London: Christopher Helm, 2011. Covers all of the birds we will see in New Britain. Useful if you plan to explore the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

Gregory, P. *Birds of New Guinea 2nd edition (including Bismarck Archipelago and Bougainville)* Lynx Edicions 2025. The recently released follow-up edition to the wonderful field guide that covers all of the sites we are visiting in one volume; an excellent book to get for this tour. **Highly recommended.**

Pratt, T.K and Beehler, B.M. *Birds of New Guinea-Second Edition*. Princeton Field Guides 2014. A completely revised and re-illustrated edition. An excellent book to get for this tour but does not cover New Britain. A bulky book to travel with. E-book available at Google Play.

BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:

Beehler, M. & T. Laman. *New Guinea. Nature and Culture of Earth's Grandest Island*. Princeton University Press, 2020. A beautiful and page-turning insight into the natural history and culture of this mega-diverse island.

Diamond, J.M. *Avifauna of the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea*. Publication of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, No.12, 1972. A scientific, ecological treatment of most of Papua New Guinea's highland birds, with information on elevation distribution, voice, and related species groups for many species.

Flannery, T. *Mammals of New Guinea*. Rev. ed. Cornell University Press, 1995. Update of the 1990 edition from Robert Brown & Associates; Queensland, Australia.

Frith, C. & B. Beehler. *The Birds of Paradise: Paradisaeidae (Bird Families of the World Series, Vol. 6)*. Oxford University Press, 1998. A spectacularly detailed account of everything that is known about the birds-of-paradise; one of the finest bird books of its genre.

HISTORY AND CULTURE:

Diamond, J. M. *Guns, Germs and Steel*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. This is the famous Pulitzer prize-winning book that should be compulsory reading for every man, woman and child on our planet.

FitzSimons, P. *Kokoda*. Hachette Australia, 2005. Kokoda was a defining battle for Australia and the WWII Pacific Campaign. A small force of ill-equipped young men engaged an experienced and hitherto unstoppable Japanese force on a narrow, precarious jungle track north of Port Moresby. This book tells the Kokoda story in a gripping and moving style and provides context for PNG during WWII.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

eBird: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists and trip reports, so one only needs accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

Merlin Bird ID: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, please download the pack for **Papua New Guinea**.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

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airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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PNGH:2023716/WN:20230729

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