



PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGHLIGHTS

JULY 12–27, 2025

WEST NEW BRITAIN EXTENSION

JULY 27–AUGUST 2, 2025

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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 New Guinea 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 on earth. However, the internal airline schedules 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 of the same areas. It is also important to realize that security can be an issue and participants are recommended to not go birding on their own and 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

July 12-13, Days 1-3: Travel to Brisbane, Australia; Flight to Port Moresby. Participants should arrange to depart the USA on or before July 12, cross the International Dateline and arrive in Brisbane no later than the early morning of July 14. 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 9:25 a.m. and arrive in Port Moresby at 12:40 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 July 14 and spending the night. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

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.

NIGHTS (July 12 & 13): In transit to Brisbane
NIGHT (July 14): Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

July 15, Day 4: Varirata National Park. As will be the case throughout much of the tour, we must arise 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 should find the enormous Papuan Frogmouth en route to the park and perhaps a pair of Large-tailed Nightjars, which regularly hunt along the road. 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 wallabies, 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 and Purple-tailed imperial-pigeons; the gorgeous Black-capped Lory; Red-cheeked and Eclectus parrots; 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; Variable Shrikethrush; Hooded Pitohui (the poison bird!); Black Berrypecker; Red-capped Flowerpecker; Black-fronted White-eye; Yellow-bellied and Pygmy longbills; Ruby-throated and Papuan Black myzomelas (especially if we find a flowering tree); Mimic and Elegant meliphagas; 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, Cinnamon Ground-Dove, Papuan Pitta, Painted Quail-thrush, Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler, Papuan Scrub-Robin, Piping Bellbird and Ochre-breasted Catbird.

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: Variable Shrikethrush, Rusty and Hooded pitohuis, Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise, Growling Riflebird and Crinkle-collared Manucode.

NIGHT: Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

July 16, 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, well-prepared meals. From here we will venture out along the main Tabubil Mine Road and associated side roads and trails into the forest. We will also take extensive boat trips along the Fly River and its tributaries, the Elevara and Ketu.

NIGHT: Kiunga Guest House, Kiunga



Papua New Guinea harbors the greatest diversity of kingfishers in the world and some of the most special like this Little Paradise-Kingfisher. © Dion Hobcroft

July 17, Day 6: Fly River. 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, 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 Southern Cassowary (present but difficult to see); Pacific Baza; Long-tailed Honey-buzzard; Gray-headed and Variable goshawks; Yellow-legged Brushturkey (typically heard only); Pale-vented Bush-hen; Great Cuckoo-Dove; Stephan's Dove; Thick-billed Ground-Pigeon (very difficult to see); Yellow-streaked and the handsome Black-capped lorries; Palm Cockatoo (a truly magnificent giant); Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrots; both Orange-breasted and Double-eyed fig-parrots; Eclectus Parrot; possibly the endangered and impressive Pesquet's (Vulturine) Parrot; White-crowned and

Dwarf koels; Greater and Lesser Black coucal; Moustached Treeswift; Rufous-bellied Kookaburra; Blyth's Hornbill (still common here); with a fair bit of luck, both Papuan and 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 have enjoyed superb views of the rarely seen Gurney's Eagle, Large Fig-Parrot, Hook-billed Kingfisher and Blue Jewel-babbler. We may also see Purple-tailed, Pinon, Collared, and Zoe imperial-pigeons. 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 will try very much to find this exceptional species. We should see a veritable rainbow of fruit-doves including Wompoo, Pink-spotted, ventbird.com

Ornate, Orange-fronted, Beautiful, Orange-bellied, and Dwarf. Cuckoos include 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.

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 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—on previous tours we have been treated to several sensational views of this spectacular bird but it remains an overall elusive species.

Then there are the birds-of-paradise. Glossy-mantled and Trumpet manucodes are both common, but can take some work to see well. We should also be able to show you 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 have to 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 and witness a display tree full of cavorting adult male Greater and Raggiana birds-of-paradise.



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

NIGHT: Kiunga Guest House, Kiunga

July 18, Day 7: Drive Kiunga to Tabubil. After a final breakfast at the Kiunga Guesthouse, we will load up for the roughly three-hour drive north to the mining town of Tabubil at the base of the remote Star Mountains. This is a very exciting region for birding and a location we have not visited for several years!

NIGHT: Hotel Cloudlands, Tabubil

July 19-20, Days 8-9: Tabubil. Over the next two days we will explore several locations around Tabubil. This is primarily foothill forest, where a host of species specialize in the zone between lowland and mountain forest. As such, there will be the possibility of seeing many species which are not possible on other sections of the tour. Target species include the desirable Pesquet's Parrot; tiny Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot; scarce Striated, Joesphine's and Fairy lorikeets; the strange Shovel-billed Kookaburra; Golden Cuckooshrike; Common and Black cicadabirds; Black-winged Monarch; poorly-known Gray-green Scrubwren; the very localized Obscure Berrypecker; White-rumped Robin; Capped White-eye; cryptic Mottle-breasted, Puff-backed, Obscure and Spotted honeyeaters; Southern Variable Pitohui; and maybe even the stunning Carola's Parotia.

During our stay, we will make one or two visits to the nearby Ok Menga hydro-electric plant where it is possible to find New Guinea's three torrent specialists: Torrent Flycatcher, Torrent-lark and the unpredictable Salvadori's Teal. A bit of perseverance and patience can be required to see these beautiful species. Birding around the plant can be quite rewarding, with flocks of Dusky and Black-capped lory often in attendance, Chestnut-breasted and White-eared Bronze cuckoos, Greater Black Coucal, White-bellied Thicket-Fantail and Scrub Honeyeaters. Although we will be visiting during the dry season, this is one of the wettest spots in the world and rain can well be expected!

NIGHT: Hotel Cloudlands, Tabubil

July 21, Day 10: Fly to Ambua Lodge. With our stay in the lowlands drawing to a close this morning, we will take a charter flight into the mountains, directly to Ambua Lodge in the Tari Valley. It will be like arriving in another country!

Without doubt, Ambua Lodge is the most comfortable lodge located within a tropical forest in 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 Black-throated Robin snatches insects from the forest edge. For three nights and two very full days we will treat ourselves to this once-in-a-lifetime experience.



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

NIGHT: Ambua Lodge, Tari Valley

July 22-23, Days 11-12: 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. We will also see the Tari Valley, a land of hidden wood-lots, secret passageways, ancient ditches, and a proud people. Here we may encounter some of New Guinea's most elusive birds such as the gigantic New Guinea Eagle, deep forest denizens such as the gorgeous Chestnut (now rare) and Forbes's forest-rails, Great Cuckoo-Dove, White-breasted Fruit-Dove, the rare Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon, and displaying Papuan Mountain-Pigeons. Lorikeets include Fairy, Papuan, Plum-faced, Yellow-billed, and Orange-billed—all of them gems. Spotted Jewel-babbler is one of **the** top birds of any trip.

With luck we may find the engaging Garnet, Ashy, 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. Recently the scarce Mottled Whistler, now Berryhunter, has been placed in its own family. The Rufous-

naped Whistler is now in a new separate family and now renamed as Rufous-naped Bellbird (with the Piping Bellbird and the Crested Bellbird of the Australian deserts).

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; Island Thrush; Papuan Logrunner; Lesser Melampitta; Blue-capped Ifrit (now also elevated to its own unique family); Island Leaf-Warbler; White-shouldered and perhaps Orange-crowned fairywren; Mountain Mouse-Warbler; three species of diminutive scrubwrens; the Brown-breasted Gerygone; Gray Thornbill; Dimorphic, Friendly and Black fantails; the very handsome Black-breasted Boatbill; Papuan Flycatcher; Black Pitohui; the peculiar-looking and scarce Wattled Ploughbill (yet another bird from New Guinea recently elevated to its own family); Papuan Treecreeper; 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.

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; Black Sicklebill with its sonic whipping call is now a rare sighting; 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 (Crested and Tit). We have a chance to see some and hopefully all of these.

NIGHTS: Ambua Lodge, Tari Valley

July 24, Day 13: Fly to Mt. Hagen; Drive to Kumul 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. For a fascinating documentary account, try and see the impressive film "First Contact." From Mt. Hagen township, we will drive westwards high into the mountains to the beautifully located Kumul Lodge. It is a little rustic and can be cool at night—the elevation is a little over 9,000 feet, so it will be **important to travel with some warm clothing**. The average temperature in Mt. Hagen in July for a typical day ranges from a high of 70°F (21°C) to a low of 57°F (14°C).

NIGHT: Kumul Lodge, Mt. Hagen

July 25, Day 14: Kumul Lodge. Kumul Lodge is a delightfully friendly place set right in the heart of New Guinea's upper montane forest. It is also 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 have two days here to explore the grounds of the lodge and the adjacent trails. We will also travel further afield to explore different elevations and habitats, which give us the chance of several species we have previously not been able to see during the tour. Some of the birds we may encounter in and around Kumul Lodge include both Chestnut and Forbe's forest-rail, Black-mantled Goshawk, New Guinea Woodcock (rare), White-breasted Fruit-Dove, and Papuan Mountain-Pigeon. The handsome Tit and Crested berrypeckers which comprise a New Guinea endemic family are definitely possible and occasionally we have found the localized Streaked Berrypecker in the valley. With a bit of luck, we should see the spell-binding white tail plumes of the Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, not to mention a bevy of honeyeaters including a number of very demonstrative species such as the gigantic yodeling Belford's Melidectes, excitable Smoky Honeyeater and glowing Red-collared Myzomela.



The superb Crested Berrypecker shows well at Kumul Lodge; representative of a New Guinea endemic bird family, the Painted Berrypeckers. © Dion Hobcroft

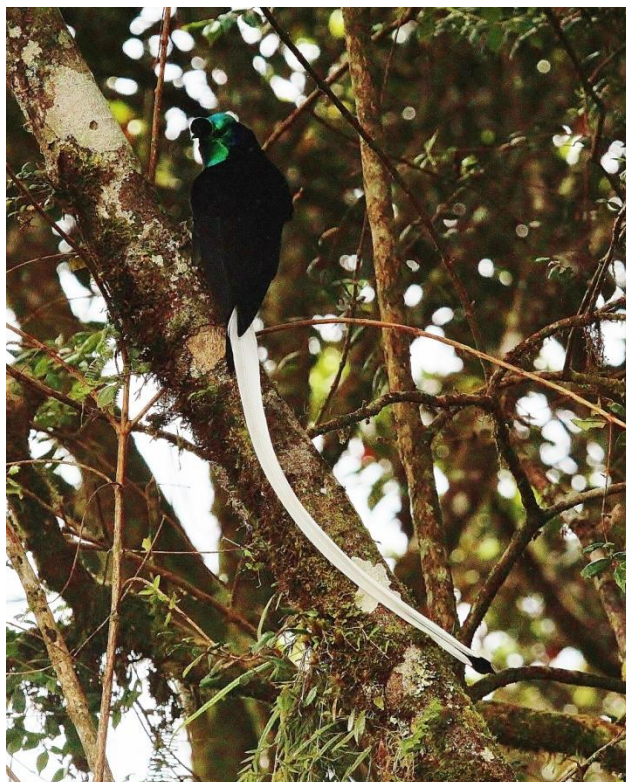


This amazing Papuan (Stella's) Lorikeet was photographed at Kumul Lodge. © Dion Hobcroft

Also present are the elusive Bronze Ground-Dove, two species of rather retiring tiger-parrots—Brehm's and the uncommon Painted; five species of lorikeet (Papuan, Plum-faced, Orange-billed, Yellow-billed and in the lower valley sometimes Goldie's); Rufous-throated Bronze-Cuckoo; Archbold's Nightjar (scarce); Mountain Swiftlet; Long-tailed Shrike; Pied Bushchat; Island Thrush; Blue-capped Ifrit; Regent, Brown-backed and Black-headed whistlers; Rufous-naped Bellbird; Island Leaf-Warbler; Mountain Mouse-Warbler; Papuan and Large scrubwrens; Brown-breasted Gerygone; Dimorphic and Black fantails; the very handsome Black-breasted Boatbill; Papuan Flycatcher; Black Pitohui; the peculiar-

looking Wattled Ploughbill; Mid-mountain and Fan-tailed berrypeckers; Hooded Munia; Mountain Firetail; with luck Torrent-lark; Great Woodswallow; and Lesser Melampitta. If the road into the lower valley is suitable, we can explore down to the Lai River, a good site for Torrent Flycatcher, Marbled Honeyeater, Mountain Meliphaga, Yellow-breasted Bowerbird and Ornate Melidectes. If road access is possible, we

can visit the display site of the Lesser Bird-of-Paradise. There is a good chance to see the intensely colored orange male Crested Satinbird feeding quietly in a fruiting tree. This is a good place to encounter this scarce and inconspicuous species. Kumul has recently become the best place to see the extraordinary Brown Sicklebill and the gorgeous Ribbon-tailed Astrapia. 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. Kumul Lodge is great for photography.



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

NIGHT: Kumul Lodge, Mt. Hagen

July 26, Day 15: 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

July 27, Day 16: Begin West New Britain Extension or Fly from Port Moresby to Brisbane; Departures for Home. Participants not continuing on the West New Britain Extension will fly to Brisbane on Qantas Flight 58 (currently scheduled to depart at 1:35 p.m. and arrive at 4:40 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 July 28. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

WEST NEW BRITAIN EXTENSION

JULY 27-AUGUST 2, 2025



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, Eclectus Parrot, Blyth's Hornbill and Purple-bellied Lory.

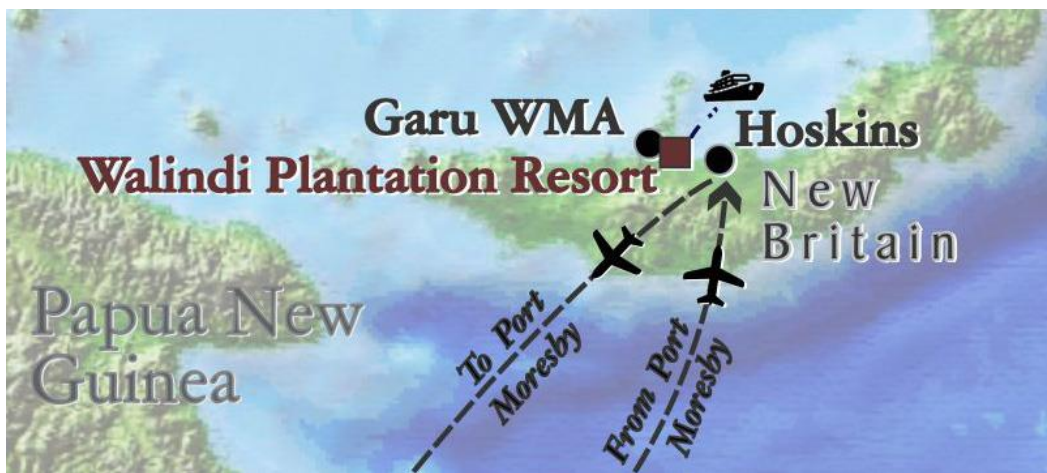
Other special birds we may see include Melanesian Scrubfowl; Blue-breasted Quail; Spotted Whistling-Duck; Black Bittern; White-browed Crake; Pacific Baza; Variable Goshawk; Pale-vented Bush-hen; Stephan's Dove; Knob-billed and Superb fruit-dove; Red-knobbed, Finsch's, Yellowish and Bismarck imperial-pigeons; 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; New Britain Pitta; New Britain Friarbird; Ashy Myzomela; Black-bellied Myzomela; Black-tailed Monarch; Shining and Dull flycatcher; Long-tailed Myna; Bismarck Crow; Black Sunbird; 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,

Mackinlay's 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; Brush Cuckoo; Sacred, Melanesian and Common kingfisher; Rainbow Bee-eater; Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove; Uniform and White-rumped swiftlet; Pacific Swallow; White-bellied Cuckooshrike; Common Cicadabird; Spangled Drongo; Metallic and Singing starlings; Willie Wagtail; and Northern Fantail.

Rare birds we sometimes have 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.



July 27, 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 accommodations at Walindi Plantation Resort.

Originally set up as a coconut plantation, Walindi is now one of the finest dive resorts in the Southwest Pacific. Thus in addition to some fine lowland birding, there will be, for those who wish the option,

snorkeling on Walindi's spectacular coral reef. After lunch we will commence our exploration of this island's fascinating birdlife while exploring the gardens of the lodge.

NIGHT: Walindi Plantation Resort, West New Britain



The forest reverberates to the deep booming of the Violaceous Coucal but catching a view requires patience. © Dion Hobcroft

July 27-July 31, Days 2-5: West New Britain.

During our time on New Britain, we will concentrate our attentions upon 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 a number of 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 narrower, shady trails to look for some of the island's more secretive species. Birds we may encounter include Melanesian Scrubfowl; Black Honey-buzzard (rare); Variable Goshawk; Oriental Hobby; New Britain Rail (secretive deep forest inhabitant); Knob-billed, White-breasted, and Superb fruit-doves; Red-knobbed, Finsch's, Yellowish and Bismarck imperial-pigeons; Amboyna and Pied cuckoo-doves; Stephan's Dove; New Britain

Bronzewing (rare); 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); Eclectus and Singing parrots; Green-fronted Hanging Parrot (rare); Channel-billed Cuckoo; 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; New Britain Pitta (a great skulker like all members of its family); Common Cicadabird and White-bellied Cuckooshrike; Northern Fantail and Willie Wagtail; Spangled Drongo; Black-tailed Monarch; Dull and Shining flycatchers; Red-banded Flowerpecker; Black and Olive-backed sunbird; New Britain Friarbird; Ashy Myzomela; the gorgeous Black-bellied Myzomela; Long-tailed Myna; Metallic and Singing starling; Bismarck Crow; and the localized Bismarck Munia.



The delightful New Britain Boobook is always a chance in the forest near the resort. © Dion Hobcroft

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 the morning of Day 3 or 4, we will take a boat out into Kimbe Bay and search among tiny forested islands for the rarely seen and globally threatened Nicobar Pigeon. In the past we have found as many as 30 birds here in addition to White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Island Imperial-Pigeon, Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove, Beach Kingfisher, Island Monarch (scarce), Black-tailed (Mangrove Golden) Whistler and Sclater's Myzomela. Possible seabirds include Brown Booby, Lesser Frigatebird, and Black-naped, Bridled and Greater Crested terns. If sea conditions permit, we may be able to go out wide into Kimbe Bay and try and chum for Heinroth's Shearwater, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, the scarce Beck's Petrel, and even the occasional Wilson's Storm-Petrel. 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

August 1, Day 6: Flight from Hoskins to Port Moresby. Today after some final birding, we will fly back to Port Moresby where we'll enjoy our farewell dinner and spend the night.

NIGHT: Airways Hotel, Port Moresby

August 2, Day 7: 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 1:15 p.m. and arrive at 4:420 p.m.) or Cairns on Air Niugini Flight 90 (currently scheduled to depart at 9:55 a.m. and arrive at 11:25 a.m.). These will enable a connection with flights to various destinations. Please inform the VENT office of your preference between Cairns and Brisbane no later than January 2, 2025 (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, Cairns or Sydney and departing for home on or after August 7. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with these arrangements.

TOUR SIZE: Each section 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. He has birded across every state and almost every corner of the Australian landmass. Max 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 six years covering as much of it as possible. He is incredibly passionate about wildlife conservation. In addition to his focus of study, he has spent much of his spare time volunteering alongside PhD researcher Ross Crates studying the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and conducting paid bird surveys. Max receives immense pleasure from birding and showing birds to others, and takes pride in writing detailed trip reports.

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 a considerable savings as it includes several flights and a good deal of additional expense if you were to pay it separately.

The fee for Papua New Guinea Highlights is **\$14,575** per person based on double occupancy and will include all meals from dinner on Day 3 through dinner on Day 15, lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, the flight from Brisbane into Port Moresby, the flight from Port Moresby to Brisbane, all internal commercial and charter flights, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee does not include airfare from your home to Brisbane and return from Brisbane, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, 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.

The single supplement for Papua New Guinea Highlights is **\$2,075**.

The fee for the West New Britain Extension is **\$4,655** per person based on double 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, alcoholic beverages, 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.

The single supplement for West New Britain is **\$600**.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for these tours is **\$1,000** per person per tour segment. For the main tour, a second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (December 14, 2024). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

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 150 days prior to the tour departure date. (February 12, 2025 for the main tour; February 27, 2025 for the extension).

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: These tours visits 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.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant on Papua New Guinea Highlights: Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant’s refund will be:</u>
210 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$500*
209 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by Participant on West New Britain Extension: Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant’s refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant’s deposit minus \$500*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must

occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant 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 sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

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 AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will

do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: 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/

AIR INFORMATION: 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 LIMITS: 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 suit cases 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 light 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.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

The bungalows at Walindi 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. Wi-fi is at the main resort building.

Airways Hotel, Port Moresby: Internet in rooms. Alcoholic drinks cannot be purchased by credit card, but can be bought with cash or charged to your room, IF a credit card has been set up in advance.

Kiunga Guest House: Comfortable air-conditioned accommodations. Internet 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 and Kumul Lodge: No internet, although your guide, at mealtimes, may provide a Hotspot using their cell phone. Purchases can be paid only by PNG Cash. Rooms at Kumul Lodge, often in the low 60's at night, are not heated but an electric mattress warmer is there for use.

Hotel Cloudlands: No wifi available; air conditioning. Basic accommodation.

CLIMATE: 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.

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.

There will be a few really rigorous walks; we may 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 up if we arrive on a weekend! You can bring an inexpensive pair in 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!

LAUNDRY: Excellent 24-hour laundry facilities are available at all locations where we stay except Kumul Lodge and Cloudlands Hotel. Tour participants have commented that as a result of the availability of such facilities, they found it unnecessary to carry as many clothes with them as on other tours.

CURRENCY: Papua New Guinea Kina (PGK); exchange facilities are available through trade banks and at the airports in Brisbane and Cairns. 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.

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

As of 2023, 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 a number of documents, including COVID-19 International Vaccine Certificate, PNG Supplementary Health Form (available via the eVisa website) and passport information. It is advisable to apply for this permit **as early as possible** in order to receive it prior to your departure. The time taken to process requests can be highly variable. Visa arrangements are prone to change with these details valid as of November 2024. The VENT office has a visa service which all participants are able to 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>

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, ventbird.com

alarm clock, 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.

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.

Chiggers, mosquitoes, and other insects can be a problem. We have found that regular use of “Cutter” or “OFF!” in lotion form, in combination with pump-action “OFF!” are most effective. We recommend that you bring one bottle of each. Please make sure you spray away from the bus and other participants.

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.

An 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 a number of 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>

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. 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 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.

MISC: Electricity - 220 volts, 50 cycles, plug type I (Australia)
Language - Melanesian Pidgin, English and Motu
Time - 14½ and 15 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

INTERNET: Wi-Fi is available at the Airways Hotel in Port Moresby and Walindi Plantation Resort. At Kiunga Guest House internet is available in the office and the breezeway near the office. No internet available at Ambua, Kumul Lodge and Cloudlands.

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.

SUGGESTED READING: 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/>.

Caulfield, C. *In the Rainforest—Report from a Strange, Beautiful, Imperiled World*. University of Chicago Press, 1986 (reprint).

Coates, B.J. *Birds of Papua New Guinea*, Vol. I and II. Australia: Dove Publications, 1990. Out-of-print. A large, spectacularly illustrated (photographs) in-depth account on all birds recorded from Papua New Guinea; includes the only reasonably accessible information on birds of New Britain, Bismarck Archipelago, and North Solomons.

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.**

Cooper, W.T. and J.M. Forshaw. *The Birds of Paradise and Bower Birds*. Boston: Godine, 1972. A marvelous over-sized volume that effectively brings together what is known of each species, accompanied by indescribably beautiful illustrations. Out-of-print.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Gregory, P. *Birds of New Guinea (including Bismarck Archipelago and Bougainville)* Lynx Edicions 2017. Finally, a field guide that covers all of the sites we are visiting in one volume; an excellent book to get for this tour. Highly recommended.

McKinnon, R., Carillet. J-B. & D. Starnes. *Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands Travel Guide*. Melbourne: Lonely Planet Guides, most recent edition.

Paijimans, K. *New Guinea Vegetation*. Australia: C.S.I.R.O. in association with the Australian National University Press, 1976. An excellent introduction to the vegetation communities of Papua New Guinea.

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. E-book available at Google Play.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

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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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