



**AUSTRALIA:
TOP END BIRDING SPECIALTIES**

13-21 NOVEMBER 2018



Gouldian Finch is one of our targets on this trip.

The 'Top End Birding Specialties' Tour provides fantastic chances of viewing many of the Top End's specialty bird species during November, including **Rainbow Pitta**, **Banded Fruit Dove** (endemic), **Hooded Parrot** (endemic), **Gouldian Finch**, and migratory shorebirds. We also seek reptiles and mammals and visit two Aboriginal rock art and occupation sites, which are home to regional and endemic species. Three boat cruises on protected waterways (one private) give us great chances to see rare and elusive freshwater riverine and floodplain bird species, such as **Little Kingfisher**, **Black Bittern**, and **Great-billed Heron**. We undertake several short walks in various tropical and World Heritage-listed habitats in the huge and diverse Kakadu National Park as well as in surrounding nature reserves and great urban birding sites along the 1300 km+ circuit of the Top End region. The brilliant photographic opportunities of birds, wildlife, and landscapes are many and varied. We would be looking to accumulate over 160 bird species on this tour, which explores the regions from Darwin - Fogg Dam - Mary River - World Heritage Kakadu National Park - Pine Creek - Katherine - Adelaide River and back to Darwin over eight bird-filled days.

This tour can be combined with our two preceding Australia tours **Birding Tour Australia: Tasmania and the Orange-bellied Parrot Pre-tour 2018** (22 – 27 October) followed by **Birding Tour Australia: From the Outback to the Wet Tropics 2018** (28 October – 12 November) and with our following tour **Birding Tour Australia: the Southwest 2018** (22 – 30 November).

Please note that the detailed itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide to the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Itinerary (9 days/8 nights)

Day 1: Arrival in Darwin

Today we'll arrive in Darwin. For those joining from the Australia East Coast Tour we will fly across from Cairns, for those not on that tour we will meet in Darwin in the evening, where we will also meet up with Luke, our expert local guide.

Overnight: Travelodge Mirambeena or similar

Day 2: Birding the Darwin environs

We'll spend the full day birding around Darwin, visiting monsoon forest, where we will search for one of our first targets of the trip, **Rainbow Pitta**. We will also bird coastal habitats, including tidal mudflats, mangroves, and coastal monsoon vine thickets for shorebirds, **Red-headed Myzomela**, and other mangrove specialists. After a picnic lunch we will drop into several other habitats including the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens and the Darwin City Esplanade. Species we hope to encounter during our first day birding in the region include **Rose-crowned Fruit Dove**, **Orange-footed Scrubfowl**, **Australian Figbird**, **Bush Stone-curlew**, **Rufous Owl**, **Barking Owl**, **Tawny Frogmouth**, **Azure Kingfisher**, **Double-barred Finch**, **Red-collared Lorikeet**, **Blue-winged Kookaburra**, and **Brahminy Kite**.

Overnight: Travelodge Mirambeena or similar

Day 3: Departure from Darwin to Mary River

A pre-dawn start sees us leaving Darwin, with morning birding at Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve. The wetland landscape here is stunning, and we will enjoy a picnic breakfast on the Adelaide River floodplain. We will spend time birding on the boardwalks, viewing platforms, and monsoon forest walks. We will continue towards the Mary River region, where we will check into our accommodation, and in the late afternoon we will enjoy birding within the tropical gardens and bush surrounding the grounds.

Species of interest during the day are likely to include **Comb-crested Jacana, Green Pygmy Goose, Crimson Finch, Forest Kingfisher, Rainbow Pitta, Whistling Kite, Paperbark Flycatcher, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Arafura Fantail, Pied Heron, and Broad-billed Flycatcher.**

Overnight: Mary River Wilderness Retreat

Day 4: Mary River to Kakadu National Park (South Alligator and Jabiru Regions)

We will take a pre-breakfast dawn boat ride along the Mary River. This rather unique riverine habitat will give us a good opportunity to view some of the more elusive bird species in the Top End and saltwater crocodile. After breakfast we will travel across to the World Heritage Kakadu National Park, passing through tropical savanna woodlands before arriving at the South Alligator Region and visiting the Ramsar-listed Mamukala Wetlands Bird Hide. On arrival at our accommodation there will be time to relax or take a walk around Jabiru Lake, looking for bush birds, waterfowl, and raptors soaring overhead.

During the course of the day we'll watch for **White-bellied Sea Eagle, Glossy Ibis, Brolga, Comb-crested Jacana, Azure Kingfisher, Australasian Swamphen, Partridge Pigeon, Bar-breasted Honeyeater, Black Bittern, Great-billed Heron, and White-gaped Honeyeater.**

Overnight: Anbinik Kakadu Resort

Day 5: Kakadu National Park (East Alligator and Yellow Water Regions)

After an early breakfast we'll head to the East Alligator Region to explore the northern reaches of the Arnhem Land Escarpment for a few short walks in monsoon forest pockets and sandstone outcrops bordering Arnhem Land. We move on to the nearby Ubirr rock art site, where we will see fascinating x-ray paintings, some thousands of years old and portraying extinct species. A short but slightly challenging walk will lead to the famous Nadab Lookout, which provides stunning views over the Nadab Floodplain and escarpment into Arnhem Land, from where the most iconic lookout photos in Kakadu are taken. This area is great for sandstone and monsoon specialists such as **Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon, Sandstone Shrike-Thrush, Rainbow Pitta, and Arafura Fantail.** We will enjoy a picnic lunch in the region before traveling to our accommodation for the next two nights.

We will take an afternoon boat cruise on the famous Yellow Water Billabong and South Alligator River (the first of two such boat trips), where waterbirds will be incredibly plentiful and set in some stunning floodplains, glowing in the afternoon sunlight.

Target birds during the day will also include **Little Woodswallow, Rainbow Bee-eater, Magpie Goose, Brolga, Black-necked Stork, Whiskered Tern, Raja Shelduck, Great-billed Heron, and Wandering Whistling Duck.**

Overnight: Cooina Lodge Kakadu

Day 6: Kakadu National Park (Burrungkuy [Nourlangie] and Yellow Water Regions)

A pre-breakfast birding session in the dramatic stone country and woodlands of the Burrungkuy (Nourlangie) Region and the monsoon forest pools of Gubara will focus on endemic birds and other exciting animals. After breakfast we will visit another rock art site, which is also home to the endemic **White-lined Honeyeater and Banded Fruit Dove,** and

later in the day we will take a picnic lunch at the Anbangbang Billabong with a choice of relaxing or a short birding walk around the hotel grounds during the late afternoon. Some highlights during the day are likely to include **Spangled Drongo, Australasian Figbird, Bush Stone-curlew, Plumed Whistling Duck, Emu, Willie Wagtail, Sacred Kingfisher, Helmeted Friarbird, Common Cicadabird, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Dusky Myzomela, and Bar-shouldered Dove.**

Overnight: Cooinda Lodge Kakadu

Day 7: Kakadu National Park (Yellow Water Region) to Pine Creek

We take a pre-breakfast boat cruise to see the Yellow Water in a different light and at dawn frenzy, where we will search for elusive birds such as **Little Kingfisher, Black Bittern, and Buff-sided Robin**, as well as golden tree snake and freshwater crocodile. After breakfast back at the lodge we will travel to the historic gold rush and railway township of Pine Creek, where we will check into our accommodation for the next two nights.

Pine Creek is considered the 'Top End's home of parrots' with ten species present, including the highly-sought-after endemic **Hooded Parrot**, but finches also feature highly, with five species of these colorful gems present, including the stunning **Gouldian Finch**. It's no wonder this is a popular place for birding!

Through the course of the day we will hope for views of **Azure Kingfisher, Great Egret, Nankeen Night Heron, Pied Heron, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Brolga, Australasian Darter, Australian Pratincole, Striated Heron, Magpie Goose, Little Pied Cormorant, Red-backed Kingfisher, Australasian Grebe, Glossy Ibis, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Red Goshawk, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Red-winged Parrot, and Northern Rosella.**

Overnight: Pine Creek Township

Day 8: Pine Creek, Katherine and Edith Falls regions

We leave our hotel early in the morning and travel to the Leliyn/Edith Falls in Nitmiluk National Park in search of the famous and colorful **Gouldian Finch** before a bush breakfast. Later we travel to the township of Katherine for birding and a picnic lunch for birdwatching in the drier inland regions, where we will search for **Apostlebird, Magpie-lark, Great Bowerbird, Banded Honeyeater, Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Cockatiel, Galah, Fairy Martin, Pink-eared Duck, Black-fronted Dotterel, Little Corella, White-throated Gerygone, Jacky Winter, and Common Bronzewing.**

Overnight: Pine Creek Township

Day 9: Pine Creek region to Darwin, where the tour concludes

We enjoy our final bush breakfast in Pine Creek before commencing our journey back to Darwin. We will drop in to the Adelaide River War Cemetery and monsoon forest along the way, time permitting, with birds on offer likely to include **Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Varied Lorikeet, Red-backed Fairywren, Weebill, Little Friarbird, Northern Fantail, Mistletoebird, Pied Butcherbird, Rufous Whistler, Olive-backed Oriole, Buff-sided Robin, Brown Falcon, Green-backed Gerygone, Silver-crowned Friarbird, and White-headed Stilt.**

On reaching Darwin the tour will conclude.

Duration: 9 days/8 nights
Group Size: 3 – 8
Date: 13 – 21 November 2018

Start: Darwin
End: Darwin

Price 2018: AU\$ 7,137 per person sharing (7-8 participants)
AU\$ 8,470 per person sharing (5-6 participants)
AU\$ 12,155 per person sharing (3-4 participants)
Single supplement: AU\$ 868

Price includes:

Lodging in comfortable hotels/lodges
All meals
All transportation during tour
Entrance fees
Expert birding guide

Price excludes:

Flights
Alcoholic drinks and drinks with evening meal
Travel insurance
Gratuities
Expenses of a personal nature (laundry, phone calls, internet, extra drinks and snacks, etc.)