



AUSTRALIA: TOP END BIRDING

29 NOVEMBER - 7 DECEMBER 2019



Rainbow Pitta is one of our targets on this trip.

The 'Top End Birding' tour provides fantastic chances of viewing many of the Northern Territory's specialty bird species during November and December, including **Rainbow Pitta**, **Banded Fruit Dove**, **Hooded Parrot**, **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-plus circuit of the Top End region.

The brilliant photographic opportunities of birds, wildlife, and scenery are many and varied. We hope 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 nine bird-filled days.

For those wishing to explore Australia further, this tour can be combined with our set of tours preceding and following this one: preceding this tour we offer **Australia: from the Outback to the Wet Tropics 2019** (6 - 22 November 2019) and **Australia: Tasmania and the Orange-bellied Parrot 2019** (23 - 28 November 2019) and following this tour **Australia: Southwest Specialties 2019** (8 - 16 December 2019), so that all four Australia tours could be combined. We can also arrange other extensions (e.g., sightseeing trips to Sydney, Uluru, etc., and pelagic trips).

Itinerary (9 days/8nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Darwin

Arrival in Darwin. For those joining from the Australia Tasmania tour we will fly across from Hobart, 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: Darwin

Day 2. Birding the Darwin environs

We will 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 Honeyeater**, 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 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: Darwin

Day 3. 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. Then we will spend time birding on the boardwalks, viewing platforms, and monsoon forest walks. Our next birding location is the Mary River region, where we will check into our accommodation in the late afternoon. Here 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

Day 4. Mary River to Kakadu National Park (South Alligator and Jabiru regions)

We will take a pre-breakfast boat ride along the Mary River at dawn. This rather unique riverine habitat will allow us a good opportunity to view some of the more elusive bird species in the Top End and possibly Salt-water Crocodile. After breakfast we will travel to the World Heritage Kakadu National Park, passing first through tropical savanna woodlands and then through a more open habitat in the South Alligator region of the park, where we will visit the Ramsar-listed Mamukala Wetlands bird hide. After arrival at our accommodation there will be time to relax or take a walk around Jabiru Lake, looking out for bush birds, waterfowl, and raptors soaring overhead.

During the course of the day we'll look 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: Kakadu National Park

Day 5. Kakadu National Park (East Alligator and Yellow Water regions)

After an early breakfast we 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. Then we'll move on to the nearby Ubirr rock art site, where we will see fascinating x-ray-style paintings, some thousands of years old and portraying extinct species. There is a short but slightly challenging walk to the famous Nadab Lookout, which provides stunning views over the Nadab floodplain and escarpment and into Arnhem Land, 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.

Then 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: Kakadu National Park

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**, **Australian Figbird**, **Bush Stone-curlew**, **Plumed Whistling Duck**, **Emu**, **Willie Wagtail**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Helmeted Friarbird**, **Common Cicadabird**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, **Dusky Honeyeater**, and **Bar-shouldered Dove**.

Overnight: Kakadu National Park

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 a 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' (a striking color form of the Common Tree Snake) and Australian Freshwater Crocodile. After breakfast 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 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 that 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 Flycatcher**, **Red Goshawk**, **Red-tailed Black Cockatoo**, **Red-winged Parrot**, and **Northern Rosella**.

Overnight: Pine Creek Township

Day 8. Edith Falls and Katherine

We leave our hotel early in the morning and travel to the Leliyn/Edith Falls waterfalls in Nitmiluk National Park in search of the famous and colorful **Gouldian Finch** before a bush breakfast. Later we travel to the town of Katherine, where we will have a picnic lunch for birdwatching in the drier inland regions. Here 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 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 gardens 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 Pied Stilt.**

On reaching Darwin the tour will conclude.

Duration: 9 days
Group Size: 4-8
Date: 29 November - 7 December 2019
Start: Darwin, Northern Territory
End: Darwin, Northern Territory

Tour Price: AU\$10,820 per person sharing (4-8 people)
Single Supplement: AU\$1,170

Price includes:

Lodging in comfortable hotels/lodges

All meals

All transportation during tour

Entrance fees

Expert birding guide

Price excludes:

International and domestic 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.)

Please note that the 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.