



**INDONESIA: THE LESSER SUNDA ISLANDS –
COMPREHENSIVE TOUR**

TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



Sumba Hornbill is a rare, shy, and endemic bird found on the island of Sumba.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT INDONESIA CAN BE READ [HERE](#)**TOUR OUTLINE**

This is an amazing opportunity to connect with numerous thrilling regional and island-endemic birds as we cover the Lesser Sunda islands of Sumba, Timor, Rote, Alor, Flores, and Komodo (with a start and end point of Denpasar, Bali “The Islands of the Gods”). This is a comprehensive tour to an area not visited by many birders annually. We will find numerous endemic owls, such as **Flores Scops Owl**, **Little Sumba Hawk-Owl**, **Rote Boobook**, and **Wallace’s Scops Owl** (and more), alongside spectacular species such as **Sumba Hornbill**, **Yellow-crested Cockatoo** (of two subspecies), **Bare-throated Whistler**, **Black-banded Flycatcher**, **Elegant Pitta**, **Ornate Pitta**, and many more delights from a wide assortment of families like honeyeaters, kingfishers, parrots, pigeons, fruit doves, flycatchers, and thrushes. We will also be looking for **Komodo Dragon**, the world’s largest lizard on this tour. We should get good photo opportunities as we make our way around these little-visited islands.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

This Indonesian birding tour through the Lesser Sunda islands needs reasonable fitness and is run at a moderate pace, covering a lot of remote ground. The tour is likely to be tiring due to the distances covered in remote areas and the heat to be expected, more on that in the “Weather/Climate” details below.

We will be visiting some remote areas on this tour, though will also be passing through towns and cities occasionally on our quest to find as many of the region’s special birds as possible. Remember we will be visiting a developing country and will be staying in remote areas, where there are limited sanitation facilities and services will be very different to what you might expect from home, or even other areas in Indonesia. Notwithstanding the above, we have tried to make this tour as comfortable as possible by staying in accommodation that we know well and is of the highest standard in the local area. Hopefully our time between birding sessions will be as comfortable and relaxing as possible. But some of the accommodation in some locations is rather basic, see more information in the “Accommodation” section below.

This tour entails multiple domestic flights and some boat trips (a mix of fast-ferries, live-aboard boats, and speedboats/outrigger boats). There are several long drives on the tour (e.g. some in the region of five hours), sometimes on poor roads and this can be tiring, particularly when the heat is added into the mix.

We will have long days in the field, though often, when the situation allows, we will rest during the heat of the middle of the day (when bird activity is lower). We will usually have an early breakfast (sometimes this will be a boxed breakfast) before we head out birding. Lunch will usually be back at our accommodation or a restaurant but occasionally might be ‘in the field’ as a boxed picnic lunch, this will very much depend on where we are birding. Dinner will most often be back at our accommodation or a nearby restaurant. There are a lot of nightbirds possible on this tour so there will be several night birding sessions either after dinner, or sometimes before dinner (with a later mealtime being on the cards). Note in some areas there are no facilities at all near birding areas (such as when we are birding on Rote), this is likely to result in a long day as we will have to leave our accommodation very early to get to the birding site for first light and

may be out until after dark in the evening (after an endemic owling session), making do with boxed meals/snacks and a late dinner. There will also be no bathroom facilities for most of this day.

Most of our birding on this tour is carried out on flat or gently undulating roads, tracks, and trails, some of these are interspersed with short and steep inclines and declines, but nothing likely to be too problematic for most people in the main, and we will be going at a slow, birding pace. When we are birding in the mountains of central Flores, we will spend most of our time birding along roads. We will likely need to come “off-piste” in our search for some of the more secretive species unlikely to be seen right from the roads and this could include short sharp inclines and declines and sometimes boggy/slippery “trails”. Most of the lowland areas are likely to be very dry and rocky, sometimes we will need to walk through dry, rocky streambeds so care should be taken. Walking sticks or hiking poles are useful by providing additional stability to aid balance and are compulsory for anyone who is not steady on their feet. Most of the walks will be short and close to vehicles, a few walks will be longer but nothing likely to cause anyone any problems if proper hydration is maintained, due to the heat.

TRANSPORTATION AND SEAT ROTATION

We use several types of transport on the tour as we move around the region by land, sea, and air.

On land we will use a range of minibuses of varying sizes, sometimes 4x4 vehicles, such as a Toyota Hilux or similar, and sometimes a group of saloon cars, such as a Toyota Avanza or similar. During our time in vehicles, we will have a seat rotation policy in place, so that everyone on the tour has the same opportunities with seating positions. All participants will be expected to abide by the seat rotation policy. People suffering from motion sickness will not be excused from this policy, so please make sure you have any medication you might need. We will be driving along windy and rough roads in places. We require that you are fit and flexible and can maneuver yourself into and around the vehicles.

We will take multiple domestic flights on this tour (see “Domestic Flights” below, for specifics).

We will potentially use a fast-ferry to move between Timor and Rote (or vice versa) depending on flight schedules, which are subject to changes beyond our control. We will have airplane-style seats and be in an air-conditioned section of the boat and the trip would take up to two hours. We will spend one night on a live-aboard boat for our trip to the Komodo Islands, we will have air-conditioned cabins (see “Boat to Komodo Island” section below).

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

This bird tour starts and ends in Denpasar, Bali, however there are multiple domestic flights required. Please refer to the tour map tab for a visualization of the tour route. The flights are anticipated to be as follows: Bali-Sumba, Sumba-Timor-Rote, Rote-Timor, Timor-Alor, Alor-Timor, Timor-Flores, and Flores-Bali assuming the flight schedule works for our needs. We may need to substitute in a fast-ferry boat trip between Rote and Timor and we will monitor flight schedules as they can change without warning.

Note that the costs for the domestic flights are included in the tour costs, but the cost for hold luggage is not included in the ticket costs. We estimate this to be in the region of between

US\$150 – US\$200 per person and will need to be paid for at the airport in Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) cash. We will update you two months before the tour as to current estimated prices in case of any unexpected changes. You will need at least between Rp1,500,000 – 2,000,000 per person for hold baggage costs. See “Money” section below.

Most providers have a weight limit of 44 pounds (20 kilograms) and a hand luggage weight limit of 15 pounds (7 kilograms). Any overweight baggage will invite additional costs by the airline used and will be the responsibility of the individual to pay (in cash) while at the airport. Making excess baggage payments at the various airports is likely to take extra time and cause delays to the group, so adhering to the baggage allowance is best for everyone.

BOAT TO KOMODO ISLAND

We will have an overnight trip on a boat to Komodo Island, likely one of the boats [here](#), the exact boat we use will be determined by our final group size and availability. If you would like additional information on the boat closer to the time of the tour, please let us know.

LUGGAGE

Please note the expected maximum weight allowances for the domestic flights and please therefore pack as lightly as possible. A medium, soft-sided, strong duffle bag (not the hard sided cases) is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles (noting that this will likely include minibuses, 4x4 vehicles, ferries, live-aboard boats, speedboats, and planes). We recommend a daypack is used to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle, in the field, and for hand luggage when flying, this should be of the standard size that fits into overhead luggage compartments in planes.

SAFETY

Your safety is our paramount importance on this tour, that’s why we try and provide you with as much thorough general and tour-specific information as possible.

Care should be taken when in cities, airports, and ports where petty theft (e.g. pickpockets etc.) could occur.

Trips and falls when on trails, tracks/roads, rocky, dry riverbeds, and while getting into or out of the vehicles or boats are all possibilities on this tour and care should be taken, especially when conditions are rocky, boggy, or slippery. A walking stick of hiking pole is compulsory if you are at all unsure on your feet. Note we will, at times, venture off marked trails/roads in pursuit of certain target birds and these may include steep inclines or declines.

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and flooding are frequent across Indonesia. We will keep abreast of the situation ahead of, and during the tour. Be aware that a volcanic eruption far away from the tour location can cause flight delays, for example should a volcano erupt in or near the Indonesian international airports in Bali or Java.

Insect repellent with a high DEET concentration can be useful for keeping Mosquitoes away. The islands we will be visiting have a low Malaria risk, but prevention of bites is recommended,

and please consult your doctor or travel health specialist for current information. We would recommend using an insect spray with a high DEET level as it can also keep chiggers and leeches away. Chiggers, possible at a couple of locations, can lead to Scrub (Bush) Typhus and can be seriously irritant as well as lead to medical issues. Leeches, possible in wet areas, like the mountains of Flores, do not spread diseases, but they are annoying and can cause blood loss. Rubber boots can help with reducing issues with chiggers and leeches.

Please follow any safety information from our boat crew on our Komodo Island trip. Care should be taken when swimming and snorkeling. The underwater life is interesting, but it does come with some dangers. We recommend you familiarize yourselves with seriously dangerous creatures such the (Sea Wasp) **Australian Box Jellyfish** and “**Blue-ringed Octopus**”.

While on Komodo Island we will be in the realm of the massive **Komodo Dragon** which is the world’s largest and heaviest lizard, weighing in at a staggering 200 pounds (90 kilograms) and measuring up to a whopping ten feet/three meters! Some have even been recorded with a weight of 330 pounds (150 kilograms)! **Komodo Dragons** should be treated with total respect, they have venom glands loaded with toxins that lower blood pressure, cause massive bleeding, prevent clotting, and induce shock. They bite down with serrated teeth and pull back with powerful neck muscles, resulting in huge gaping wounds. The venom then quickens the loss of blood and sends the prey into shock. Dragons can calmly follow an escapee for miles as the venom takes effect, using their keen sense of smell to locate the corpse. Read more from National Geographic on these amazing living dinosaurs, [here](#). Our time on Komodo Island will be carefully managed by national park staff and the safety of visitors is one of their main concerns.

WEATHER/CLIMATE

We can expect the weather on the tour to mainly be hot and dry, while when we are birding in forests it may feel more humid. Most of the birding is carried out in the lowlands of Sumba, Rote, Alor, and Komodo where we can expect daytime temperatures of around 85–91 °F (30–33 °C) and nighttime temperatures of around 69–72 °F (20–22 °C). When in the lowlands of Flores and Timor the same can be expected, however on both of these islands we will also spend some time birding at higher elevations, e.g. up to 6,000 feet (1,800 meters) on Timor up to 8,200 feet (2,500 meters) on Flores. Here we can expect lower temperatures, though apart from very early morning it isn’t really that much colder, and our accommodation will be located lower than the birding areas so not quite as cold as the birding sites. While birding at these higher elevations, we can expect temperatures of around 70–75 °F (21–23 °C) during the day and temperatures of around 50–60 °F (10–16 °C) at night. We can sometimes experience winds that might make temperatures feel hotter than they actually are (the opposite to a wind chill!). Rain showers are unlikely, though always possible, particularly when we are in the mountains on Flores.

The sun gets very hot, very quickly in the morning and it is imperative that hydration levels are maintained, and sunscreen applied from early in the day.

ACCOMMODATION

We will stay in a range of accommodation during the tour and the majority of this is comfortable,

though one night in Sumba will be in very basic accommodation (this is a necessity to bird the area we want to explore for the best chance of the endemic forest birds of the island). All accommodation will have air conditioning and/or a ceiling or standing fan (with the exception of the one night in remote Sumba). Most accommodation will have Wi-Fi and the majority (with the exception of all on Sumba) will be in areas with phone signal. Some Wi-Fi might be restricted to public areas, such as restaurants. All rooms will have ensuite facilities with western toilet facilities. Some bathrooms (e.g. in Rote) may be of the “wet-room” style commonly found throughout Asia. We will be spending one night on a live-aboard boat as we travel to Komodo Island (see the “Boat to Komodo Island” section above for specific information on that).

We are visiting multiple islands on this tour, some of the accommodation is very close to birding sites and others are a little further away (due to the remote nature of where we are going). On some days we will have to drive one hour from our accommodation to where we want to be birding, and on some days (like while birding on Rote) we might have to drive over two hours from our accommodation – which is the closest option currently based on exploration of the area in October 2021).

COMMUNICATIONS

There is phone signal across much of the tour route though there are some areas where there is no, or very limited signal. The phone signal in Sumba is very poor, even in the towns, where we stay overnight, and where we go birding. Most of the other islands have better connections. The easiest option will be to use your phone on an international roaming package. It will be possible to purchase and use a local SIM, but because we will be visiting multiple islands it will entail quite a lot of faff and is not really recommended, unless totally essential, though we can help guide you if you want to go down this route. It will definitely be easier to rely on Wi-Fi in the various accommodations we stay at. Most airports we visit will have free Wi-Fi.

FOOD AND MEALS

The food during the tour will be of local Indonesian style. In some of the areas we visit (such as when we are in the larger cities and tourist areas) we will be able to get western style food, but this is only on a couple of days, the majority of food will be local. Bringing cereal bars (or energy/protein bars) might be useful for during early mornings or during a long drive, when a snack is required. Some of the places we visit on this tour are remote with limited, or no, convenience stores. It is actually recommended that if you have particular preferences of snacks, you bring them with you from home as we will have limited opportunities for picking up recognizable snacks on the tour, though in some areas we will be able to make use of great bakeries.

Due to the nature of the birding on this tour (outlined in the “Daily Activities, Physical Requirements, and Tour Pace” section above), meals will be at a range of times, sometimes early or late breakfasts and early or late evening meals and will be dictated by the birding or traveling occurring in the day/night. We may get a sit-down breakfast on some occasions and at other times these may be boxed and rather basic (again, we will be going to remote areas and fancy food is not really a feature of most of this tour). On some occasions we will have lunch back at our accommodation or a nearby local warung (local restaurant), though we might also have a

picnic-style boxed lunch. Many of the meals will involve an assortment of meat (mainly chicken and fish, occasionally beef and seafood) and vegetable dishes. There will be a hearty supply of rice and noodles with most lunches and evening dinners. A selection of food will usually be placed in the center of the table and shared by the group. Us knowing your dietary preferences ahead of the tour is essential, so please fill us in on anything we should know.

If you must eat food at certain times, for medical reasons for example, please bring a supply of snacks to do so because we cannot guarantee set mealtimes on this birding-focused tour.

MONEY

Important Note: You will need at least between Rp1,500,000 – 2,000,000 per person for hold baggage costs that are not included within the tour costs.

It is recommended that you either bring a supply of Indonesian rupiah with you from home or withdraw some cash from the international airport that you arrive at (such as Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport, where the tour starts from). There should be opportunities to withdraw cash, if needed when in Bali (at the airport), Kupang (Timor), Ruteng (Flores), and Labuan Bajo (Flores). It is unlikely that there will be opportunities to withdraw cash while on Rote, Alor, or while in more remote areas of Timor and Flores. There are no facilities on Komodo Island.

It is not uncommon to have difficulties trying to use ATMs in some of the more remote areas and small towns. Not all banks/ATMs accept all foreign cards, most are usually limited to a withdrawal maximum of Rp2,000,000 in one go. Most international bank cards will incur a fee for taking cash from the ATMs.

Most extra purchases/personal expenses are likely to require payment by cash, with the exception of hotels in major cities where cards should be fine to be accepted. Note it is not uncommon for card payment machines, even in major towns and cities, to not work due to problems with the phone line, the internet connection, or other issues.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

The following is a list of useful items to bring on this birding tour around the Lesser Sunda Islands and should be read in conjunction with the general information document for Indonesia.

1. A field guide to the region. The following book is best for this tour: **Birds of the Indonesian Archipelago: Greater Sundas and Wallacea** – James A Eaton *et al.* (2021), Lynx Edicions. 2nd Edition. The Flexibound version of the 2nd edition of this book is best, rather than the hardback or outdated 1st edition versions that are also available.
2. A walking stick or a hiking pole to help on the slippery or rocky tracks and trails. **A walking stick is compulsory for anyone who is unsteady walking**, as we feel this is a safety issue; we do not want anyone falling over. Uncertain if you need one? Please consult with us.
3. Flashlight (torch) and/or a headlamp, and spare batteries/chargers – essential kit for this tour as we will be having multiple owling sessions with endemic owls being found on all main islands we visit. We will have spotlights for observing the birds, but you will need something small so that you can see where you are putting your hands and feet as we

- walk around, sometimes on roads and trails, sometimes while bushwhacking.
4. High concentration DEET insect repellent.
 5. Leech socks – useful, particularly if it is wet (rubber boots might work) and when owling at night, e.g. on Flores when it's not as easy to see what's going on.
 6. A small personal first aid kit. See the suggested items from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [here](#). There are pharmacies in all cities we will pass through, but we will only have limited time and access to these.
 7. Walking/hiking boots are probably best for this tour as they provide good ankle support. Rubber boots can be useful but likely only when birding in the mountains of Flores, so probably not worth bringing for the whole tour, though they can help with keeping leeches or chiggers at bay (but leech socks should be sufficient here).
 8. Clothes made with a quick-drying fabric are the best for this tour (see the “Weather/Climate” section for further information on likely temperatures during the tour). You are likely to get sweaty and so rinsing out clothes might be needed. Laundry facilities will be very limited on this tour. A fleece can be useful/necessary when birding at the higher elevation sites such as on Flores, and less so on Timor (mainly in the early morning period).
 9. Rain jacket (and small umbrella) for the time in the mountains when rain could be possible. A dry bag to keep important documents in.
 10. Swimwear, mask, and snorkel for optional swimming during our Komodo Island boat trip. Note the boat we use has snorkeling equipment to hire (hire costs to be paid in Indonesian rupiah, cash).
 11. Power bank – useful for keeping cell phones charged up, or if there are any unexpected power cuts while in remote areas.



*Found only on the island of Rote, we will look for the endemic **Rote Myzomela**.*