



**BIRDING TOUR AUSTRALIA:
EASTERN AUSTRALIA – FROM THE OUTBACK TO THE WET
TROPICS**

TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



Victoria's Riflebird is one of two birds-of-paradise possible on this eastern Australia birdwatching tour.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT AUSTRALIA CAN BE [READ HERE](#)

TOUR OUTLINE

This is a comprehensive birding tour of eastern Australia. The first leg of our eastern Australian bird tour starts in Melbourne, Victoria. It makes a circuit around the southeastern Australian state (including a brief foray into southern New South Wales, where we will make a nocturnal trip for the monotypic and extremely rare **Plains-wanderer**) before returning to Melbourne. The second leg of the tour sees us flying from Melbourne to Brisbane in southern Queensland; here, we will visit the fantastic O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. After our birding in Lamington National Park, we will fly north from Brisbane to Cairns (Far North Queensland) for the third and final leg of the tour. From Cairns, we will make a circuit of the fertile and rainforest-clad Atherton Tablelands and the adjacent dry country lower down in the foothills. While in Queensland, our tour also includes a boat trip to the Great Barrier Reef and a boat cruise along the Daintree River. We will finish up our eastern Australian birdwatching tour back in Cairns, where the tour will conclude.

This is our most popular Australian birdwatching tour. There are a lot of simply incredible birds possible on this eastern Australia birding tour (which also combines perfectly with our Tasmania bird tour, which many people choose to do). Top highlights include **Southern Cassowary, Malleefowl, Superb Lyrebird, Albert's Lyrebird, Brolga, Rufous Scrubbird, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Golden Bowerbird, Great Bowerbird, Green Catbird, Paradise Riflebird, Victoria's Riflebird, Australian King Parrot, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Pink** (Major Mitchell's) **Cockatoo, Superb Parrot, Shy Heathwren, Striated Fieldwren, Mallee Emu-wren, Superb Fairywren, White-winged Fairywren, Striated Grassbird, Australian Logrunner, Chowchilla, Painted Honeyeater, and Diamond Firetail**. This Australian bird tour also offers some excellent and emblematic Australian mammals, such as **Platypus, Short-beaked Echidna, Koala, Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo, and Red Kangaroo**. A high-quality list of reptiles, amphibians, and other critters can be enjoyed too. This is the best birding tour if you've never visited Australia before.

The Victoria section of this Australian bird tour may run in reverse to the order advertised in the itinerary, based on the availability of accommodation and local guides. On some occasions, we need to run the tour in reverse, e.g., starting in Cairns and ending in Melbourne with Brisbane in the middle. We will go to exactly the same places but just in the opposite order shown in the online itinerary. Please confirm the order of the route with us prior to purchasing your international flight tickets for the start and end of the tour.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

Our comprehensive eastern Australia birding tour moves at quite a fast pace. We will cover a lot of ground on this Australian birdwatching tour, with a big overland circuit of the western side of Victoria (starting and ending at Melbourne airport) and including a trip into southern New South Wales at Deniliquin. In Victoria, we will visit the towns of Healesville, Wangaratta, Ouyen, Inglewood, and Airey's Inlet. We will take two domestic flights during our bird tour, Melbourne to Brisbane and Brisbane to Cairns. There will be less driving in Brisbane (southern Queensland) as most of our time will be spent on foot around O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, once we get there, after some birding in the Brisbane mangroves. In northern Queensland, we will take a boat trip

onto the Great Barrier Reef, then make a circuit from Cairns south along the coast to Mission Beach, before coming inland and up onto the fertile Atherton Tablelands. After birding the tablelands, we will drop down to the dry north for a different set of birds, before finishing up back at Cairns after a boat cruise along the Daintree River. There is less driving in northern Queensland than in Victoria. This Australian bird tour will cover a wide range of habitats and a big trip list of 375 - 400 bird species should be expected.

In Victoria, we will have long drives of 4 – 6 hours on most days to get between different birding areas. In Queensland, we will have drives of 2 – 3 hours. We will usually have a pre-breakfast early morning birding session and then, after breakfast, do a little more birding in our local area before the heat increases and bird activity drops. We then move off to our next area. We will usually aim to make the drives across the middle of the day and break them up with lunch stops and restroom/coffee breaks.

The tour is generally considered easy to moderate in terms of physical exertion. However, the inland temperatures during the day, even during the spring period, could get high (see the “Weather” section below), so dehydration needs to be always considered a possibility, as does heat stroke and sunburn, etc.

In Victoria, we tend to make short and productive walks from our vehicle in a loop of up to 0.6 – 1.2 miles (1 – 2 kilometers/km), and we may make several of these a day. On a couple of occasions in Victoria, we are likely to make slightly longer walks of 2.5 miles (4 km). In Lamington National Park, we will spend most of our time on foot walking around the forest trails and roads (as well as mooching around the excellent retreat gardens). We will usually make a pre-breakfast walk of 1.2 miles (2 km), a post-breakfast walk of 3.5 – 5 miles (6 – 8 km), and then a late afternoon walk of a similar distance. All walks at O’Reilly’s are totally optional. If you’d rather sit in the garden soaking up the wonderful birds on offer, such as **Crimson Rosella**, **Australian King Parrot**, **Regent Bowerbird**, and **Satin Bowerbird**, that’s totally fine. In the tropical north of Queensland, we will make short walks of 0.6 – 1.2 miles (1 – 2 km) at different sites, and we might make several of these a day. We usually walk from our hotel to the quay to meet our reef trip boat, this is 0.6 miles (1 km). The trail at Mount Lewis is the hardest trail as it involves some incline and maneuvering around fallen trees and some rocks, but it’s still relatively easy, and we will take it at a slow birding pace. Walking in Victoria is often on fairly flat but rough (uneven) ground with rabbit holes and loose rocks, so care needs to be taken. In some areas, such as the mallee habitats, we will be walking in very spiky spinifex grass. Snakes should always be considered when on foot on the whole tour route.

We will make a few general nighttime trips for nocturnal birds and wildlife during the tour (weather permitting), as well as the specific **Plains-wanderer** trip (see details below). Most owling/mammal-watching sessions will last an hour or so, usually after dinner, and these are all optional.

TRANSPORTATION

We will use 12-seater minibuses on this tour; these will be collected in each city we arrive in and dropped back off there on our return. There will be limited baggage space, so please pack as lightly as possible for the tour (including within the seating area). We will have some long drives on the tour, particularly in Victoria (often on long straight roads). Some of the drives, particularly in

Queensland, will involve long and windy mountain roads, so if you suffer from motion sickness, you might want to be prepared for that (e.g., the drive up to and down from O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, the drive up and down Mount Lewis, and as we climb up and drop off the Atherton Tablelands). When we make our **Plains-wanderer** trip, the group might get split into two vehicles with our local guides; these might be 4x4 Toyota Hilux / Landcruiser-type vehicles. See the "Plains-wanderer Trip" section below for more information.

We will make two boat trips on this tour, see the "Boat Trips" section below, and we will also take two domestic flights during this tour, see the "Domestic Flights" section below.

BOAT TRIPS

We will take a boat trip out onto the Great Barrier Reef. This is not a private reef trip, and there will be up to around 30 participants on the boat. This is one of the smaller boats that goes to the reef, and it is usually the first boat there, which means we will likely get to Michaelmas Cay prior to too much disturbance. The boat has a no-shoe policy, so footwear should be removed upon entering. We will be out on the water from around 07:30 hrs. to around 15:00 hrs.

The boat has toilets, and we will have meals (a morning snack and lunch) and drinks onboard. You will need to bring your own personal water supply for the day, though additional drinks can be purchased throughout the day whilst on the boat. We will get on and off the boat in Cairns Marina, so this is a dry boarding/disembarking. There are opportunities for diving and snorkeling while on this trip – which is highly recommended. The reef trip company does not supply towels; usually, our hotel in Cairns will allow us to take a beach towel for the day for a small deposit.

The boat has a medium-sized lounge with air-conditioning as well as a top deck with seating (no aircon here, but there is often a cooling breeze). It is very easy to get sunburnt on this trip, so please bring plenty of suncream, as well as sunglasses (strong glare) and a sunhat. Swimwear is best worn on the boat as a base layer, and the reef trip company will provide wetsuits (necessary in "stinger season" – which refers to jellyfish present at certain times of the year). The reef trip company provides snorkeling equipment (including a limited supply of prescription masks – for a deposit payable/held on credit card). The reef trip company provides a health and safety questionnaire on arrival, and it is essential that you fill this out with the correct information. The reef trip company's word on the boat is final, and your health and safety is their (and our) paramount concern.

We will usually try and land on Michaelmas Cay to observe the breeding birds at close range; however, if tidal or weather conditions prevent us from doing so, we will try and circumnavigate the island in a smaller glass-bottomed boat. The exact activities of the day are totally weather and tide-dependent. If you suffer from motion sickness, you may need to take medication for this trip. If we do land on Michaelmas Cay, it will be a wet landing and re-entry, usually up to ankles, rarely your knees; the boat can usually land against the sandy beach.

We will also take a boat trip on the Daintree River during the tour; this is a small boat, like a speedboat. We will journey along the wide Daintree River and then enter smaller, narrower tributaries that take us close into the mangroves, where we are seeking the rarer and more secretive species. The boat has a pop-up cover for the sun, but this inhibits viewing, so we usually try not to use it. We will be exposed to the elements on this trip, so a sunhat, sunglasses, and sunscreen are essential (as well as potentially a rain jacket/poncho if the weather looks threatening). Note on the larger river section we might move quite quickly, so watch out for your hat blowing off! The boat

trip is usually around two hours in duration and often starts at dawn or ends at dusk, mainly depending on the tidal situation. Do not dangle your hands out of the boat into the water – there are **Saltwater Crocodiles** here – see the “Safety” section below.

If you'd like further information on either of these boat trips, please [contact us](#).

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

This tour requires two domestic flights (Melbourne to Brisbane and Brisbane to Cairns). The costs for these flights are not included in the tour cost. Once we confirm the tour, we will purchase flight tickets for everyone in the group at the same time to ensure we are all on the same flights. The additional cost of flights will be added to your tour balance payment, which is due no later than two months prior to departure. Please refer to the Australia general information document regarding important information on baggage allowance (including carry-on allowance). We usually try and make our domestic flights with Qantas or Virgin Australia as we have found they offer the best service.

PLAINS-WANDERER TRIP

While in Deniliquin in New South Wales, we will take a nocturnal trip to look for **Plains-wanderer**. Depending on the local situation on the vast grass plains these birds inhabit, we may drive around looking for the birds, or walk around to try and locate them. We are usually out searching from dusk until around midnight on this night and return to our accommodation after 1 a.m. (the following day usually gets a later start than usual!).

Walking around at night can be particularly disorienting, so it is essential the group always stays together. Small torches/head torches are essential for seeing where you are putting your feet, and if you have any balance/walking issues, a walking stick/hiking pole is also mandatory. It is very easy to trip and fall in this environment, so extreme care must always be taken. A decent supply of insect repellent is recommended for this trip as it can be quite buggy in some years. This trip is totally optional and if you would rather sit it out, that is fine, though this is one awesome and unique bird, so we do recommend joining the exploration if possible.

On this evening, we usually buy some food from a local bakery or supermarket and create a picnic dinner to be eaten on site or in our hotel rooms prior to departure.

LUGGAGE

Please pack as lightly as possible for this tour, noting the expected weight allowance of the domestic flights detailed above (and in the general information document on Australia) and the limited space inside vehicles. A medium, soft-sided, and robust duffle bag is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles and on the planes we will use. You will be expected to load and unload your own bags into and out of vehicles and as we move around airports. A lighter bag is likely to get less tiresome as we move around a lot on this tour, with lots of loading, unloading and repacking required.

We recommend a daypack is used to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle or when birding in the field (such as binoculars, camera, notebook, field guide, personal supply of

water, snacks, umbrella, rain jacket, extra layers of clothing, etc.).

ACCOMMODATION

In Victoria and New South Wales (for one night), we mainly stay in hotels or motels, and in some locations, we stay in caravan sites, utilizing motel-type rooms. We usually change accommodations every night for this section of the tour, except for when we are in Ouyen, Victoria, in the mallee, where we spend two nights. We try to stay in the best accommodation available along our route, but these might still be fairly basic in some remote locations. All accommodation has ensuite bathrooms. At Melbourne airport, we will stay in an airport hotel. Most of the accommodation has Wi-Fi. Some of the accommodation offers breakfast, and we often get these delivered to our rooms the night before or in the morning itself. In some locations, we will eat breakfasts in cafés in nearby towns.

In southern Queensland, we will stay at the wonderful O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat for two nights. This is more upmarket accommodation than everywhere else we stay on the tour. This accommodation has ensuite bathrooms and is set in wonderful grounds for birding. We will eat breakfast and dinner in the retreat's dining room and will have lunches in the café. There is free Wi-Fi in the lodge (usually just in the reception, bar, and restaurant areas).

In northern Queensland, we will stay at a nice hotel on the Cairns esplanade at the start and end of our circuit (luggage can be stored here until our return). For our circuit of northern Queensland, we will stay in a couple of hotels/motels as well as the excellent Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodges (top-quality birds and wildlife right outside our rooms). Our accommodation has been chosen for the best access to quality birding areas. All accommodation has Wi-Fi and private ensuite bathrooms. We usually eat meals in nearby towns, rather than at our accommodation, e.g., in nearby cafés or restaurants/pubs.

WEATHER

Because this eastern Australia birding tour covers a vast area, including spring in Victoria as well as tropical Far North Queensland, you should expect quite a temperature range, and suitable clothing will be required.

In Victoria and New South Wales during the time of our tour, nighttime temperatures could drop as low as 46 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) (8 degrees Centigrade/°C); however, we have occasionally had colder. Daytime temperatures in the south could peak at 59 °F (15 °C), and at higher elevations (e.g., the hills around Melbourne and along the Great Ocean Road), it could take a while to reach that temperature. If there is a southerly wind blowing, it can feel much colder with the wind chill (the wind will be coming from Antarctica!). Daytime temperatures in central and northern Victoria and southern New South Wales can reach 86 °F (30 °C); on occasion (particularly if there is a warming wind coming from the northwest), the temperatures can be hotter than this.

In southern Queensland (e.g., Brisbane), it will likely be around 86 °F (30 °C) and usually feels hotter than we will have experienced earlier in the tour, potentially a little more humid too. Up at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, we will be at around 3,300 feet (1,000 meters); therefore, the temperatures are lower (it can feel cold here at night), and during the day, it is likely to be around 68 – 77 °F (20 – 25 °C).

Northern Queensland (e.g., Cairns) will see similar temperatures to those of Brisbane, but it will be more humid, particularly when we are inside the forest. It will be a touch cooler on the Atherton Tablelands as we will be higher up, and it usually takes a while for the sun's rays to warm us up – particularly at Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodges, where we are situated in a bit of a bowl. At Mareeba, it will be a similar temperature to Brisbane and Cairns but much drier. It will be very hot at Michaelmas Cay (e.g., 95 °F / 35 °C), with no shade.

The sun is strong across Australia, and care should be taken to avoid sunburn and dehydration.

SAFETY

We do not recommend walking around Cairns at night on your own for personal safety reasons. We will usually walk from our chosen restaurant in Cairns to our nearby hotel in the dark, but we will do so as a group. Please do not leave valuables (or anything at any time) inside the vehicle when it is parked to help reduce the risk of anyone breaking into the vehicle. Please keep a close watch on your possessions (e.g., bags, wallet, optics, etc.) when we are out and about in the city.

During the Far Northern Queensland section of this eastern Australian bird tour (e.g., once we start the Cairns section of the tour), we need to take care due to the presence of **Saltwater Crocodiles** that can occur in or near the smallest waterbodies; they can also be found up to 0.6 miles (1 km) away from water. At times, we will be birding within habitats that crocodiles inhabit, such as rivers (including inland rivers – “crops” can occur over 124 miles (200 km) from the coast), coastal mangroves, and wetlands. Please do not stand close to the water's edge or go anywhere near water at night. Crocodile warning signs are often in place and should always be adhered to. Please refer to the [Croc Wise website](#) for more information. We usually only see crocodiles when on our Daintree River boat cruise, but we could come across them in other locations, so it is best to read the information and be prepared (and do not dangle your hands in the water on the river cruise!).

Other general safety information, as referred to in the Australia general information document, should be considered, e.g., regarding snakes, etc.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

The following is a list of useful items to bring on this eastern Australian birding tour and should be read in conjunction with the Australia general information document.

1. A field guide to the birds of Australia. See the general information for our recommendations for this tour.
2. Hiking pole or walking stick to help on the tracks and trails. While probably not necessary for everyone, **a walking stick is compulsory for anyone who is unsteady walking**, as we feel this is a safety issue. We don't want anyone slipping on the trails or anywhere else. Please discuss with us if you are unsure whether you will need one or not.
3. Torch (flashlight) and/or headlamp (headtorch), and spare batteries, necessary for when we are making nocturnal walks and when on our **Plains-Wanderer** trip.
4. High-concentration DEET insect repellent or similar.
5. A flynet for your face is very useful in some years.
6. A small personal first aid kit. See the suggested items from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [here](#).

7. Lightweight hiking boots are likely the best footwear for this tour. A set of sandals (flip-flops) and/or trainers would be useful for walking around some of the accommodations but are not suitable for birding time (consider snake bites, mud, slips, trips, falls, etc.).
8. Quick-drying birding clothes (in suitable colors) are the best for this tour, and a good selection of clothing layers (including sweater/jumper/fleece/coat) are also recommended for time at the higher elevations and due to the potential for cool or even cold mornings in Victoria and at elevation in southern Queensland.
9. Light rain jacket/poncho (and small umbrella) as rain could fall at any time and any location. Spring in Victoria could see rain showers or prolonged periods of rain if a weather system moves through. In Queensland, there is a slim chance of a tropical rainstorm (usually in the afternoon or at night, if at all). Thunderstorms (including hail) are not uncommon at the time of year we will be in Queensland.
10. Some of the places we stay have swimming pools, and we will have excellent and highly recommended swimming opportunities on the Great Barrier Reef, so swimwear is recommended. The reef trip company provides snorkeling gear.
11. A small hand towel or washcloth can be handy for cleaning and drying things when in the rainforest and also removing dust in drier areas. Not essential, but it can be useful.
12. A dry bag to keep valuable documents in, such as passports, cell phones, wallets, etc., as well as cameras, if it rains or is dry and dusty.



Australian Logrunner is an endemic bird that we will search for while birding at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat in southern Queensland.