



INDONESIA BIRDING TOUR: SULAWESI AND HALMAHERA – SPECTACULAR ENDEMIC BIRDING

15 – 30 JULY 2025



Maleo, the only member of the monotypic genus Macrocephalon in the Megapode family, is endemic to the island of Sulawesi. We will be looking for it on this tour.

This small-group birding tour in Indonesia visits the two endemic-filled islands of Sulawesi and Halmahera. These two islands straddle the equator and sit between the islands of Borneo to the west and New Guinea to the east. They also offer some of the best birding on the planet (and some good photo opportunities). Sulawesi, accessed through its capital city Makassar, in the southwest of this interestingly shaped island (also a convenient international arrivals entry point into Indonesia and the start/end point of our tour), is the westernmost of the two islands and is part of the Greater Sundas (along with Borneo, Sumatra, and Java). The other island, Halmahera, is more Australasian in nature and is part of the North Maluku Islands (also known as the Moluccas). We enter Halmahera through the town of Kao, in the north, and depart from Sofifi in the west via a speedboat to the small island of Ternate, to the west of Halmahera (the closest airport to Sofifi).

This tour provides some incredible birding opportunities with a dose of adventure too, likely to leave you with a firm desire to explore further throughout this bird-filled Indonesian archipelago. Both islands are to the east of the famous Wallace Line, an invisible faunal boundary line which divides the biogeographical realms of Asia and Wallacea (a transitional zone between Asia and Australia) and named after the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace. The avifauna of Sulawesi and Halmahera is distinctly Wallacean, headlined by the bizarre mound-nesting megapode, **Maleo** on Sulawesi and the **Standardwing** (also known as Wallace's Standardwing or Standardwing Bird-of-paradise), whose raucous calls echo through the forests on Halmahera, as they bounce around their display leks – a magical sight.



*We will visit a lek of the rather unique (Wallace's) **Standardwing**, a range-restricted bird-of-paradise and one of many spectacular birds we will look for on Halmahera.*

The birding on these islands is excellent, with a variety of stunningly colored endemic kingfishers which illuminate the forest in the Sulawesi lowlands (such as **Sulawesi Lilac**

Kingfisher, Green-backed (Blue-headed) Kingfisher, and **Sulawesi Dwarf Kingfisher**), the **Hylocitrea** (a highly sought-after monotypic family), the enigmatic **Geomalia** (an aberrant ground thrush), and the **Satanic Nightjar** in the mountains. Further to the aforementioned **Standardwing**, the island of Halmahera also supports the huge **Ivory-breasted Pitta**, several spectacular kingfishers such as **Common Paradise Kingfisher**, **Blue-and-white Kingfisher**, and **Sombre Kingfisher**, the unobtrusive **Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove**, the bizarre **Moluccan Owlet-nightjar**, and **Halmahera Paradise-crow** (a member of the bird-of-paradise family).



A Green-backed (Blue-headed) Kingfisher sits patiently in the forests of northern Sulawesi.

The above are just a few of the potential highlight birds we will be looking for during this tour. Some of the many other targets include **Gurney's Eagle**, **Sulawesi Nightjar**, **Purple-bearded Bee-eater**, **Sulawesi Pitta**, **North Moluccan Pitta**, **Invisible Rail**, **Blue-faced Rail**, **Grey-headed Fruit Dove**, **White-necked Myna**, **Red-backed Thrush**, **Ashy Woodpecker**, **Knobbed Hornbill**, **Sulawesi Hornbill**, **Blyth's Hornbill**, **Yellow-billed Malkoha**, **Ochre-bellied Boobook**, **Halmahera Boobook**, **Scaly-breasted Kingfisher**, **Beach Kingfisher**, **Great-billed Kingfisher**, **Azure Dollarbird**, **Sulawesi Blue Flycatcher**, **Great Shortwing**, **Sulawesi Streaked Flycatcher**, **Malia**, **Rufous-bellied Triller**, **Piping Crow**, and **Goliath Coucal**. There are also plenty of brightly colored parrots (especially on Halmahera, which has a more Australasian feel than Sulawesi) such as **White Cockatoo**, **Moluccan Eclectus**, **Great-billed Parrot**, **Violet-necked Lory**, **Chattering Lory**, **Moluccan King Parrot**, and **Moluccan Hanging Parrot**. A highly rewarding and thoroughly exciting tour is guaranteed here!

This exciting Sulawesi and Halmahera birding tour can easily be combined with some of our other Indonesian birding tours, such as those that cover the endemic-rich Lesser Sunda Islands (before this tour) or West Papua (after this tour).

Detailed Itinerary (16 days/15 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Makassar

A non-birding arrival day into Indonesia. After your arrival in Makassar, you will be transferred to our nearby hotel for the rest of the day at your leisure. We will meet for a group welcome dinner together in the evening.

Overnight: Harper Perintis Makassar, Makassar (or similar)

Day 2. Flight from Makassar to Manado, birding Tangkoko area and mangrove boat trip

We will take a morning flight from Makassar to Manado and once we arrive in the northern city, we will drive to our base at Batuputih Bawah near Tangkoko, where we will check in to our accommodation for the next few nights.

In the afternoon we will take a boat trip into the mangroves where we will look for the localized **Great-billed Kingfisher**. We will also be on the lookout for **Great-billed Heron**, **Pacific Reef Heron**, **Striated Heron**, **Brahminy Kite**, **White-bellied Sea Eagle**, **White-rumped Cuckooshrike**, **Common Kingfisher**, **Collared Kingfisher**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Pied Imperial Pigeon**, **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, **Lesser Frigatebird**, **Slender-billed Crow**, and **Golden-bellied Gerygone**. There may be some early shorebird migrants about too, such as **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Grey-tailed Tattler**, or **Common Sandpiper**.

Overnight: Tangkoko Lodge, Batuputih Bawah



Great-billed Kingfisher is a shy Sulawesi endemic found in the mangroves. We will take a boat ride during our time in the Tangkoko area to locate this species.

Days 3 – 4. Birding Tangkoko area (including Tangkoko Batuangus Nature Reserve and Temboan Hill)

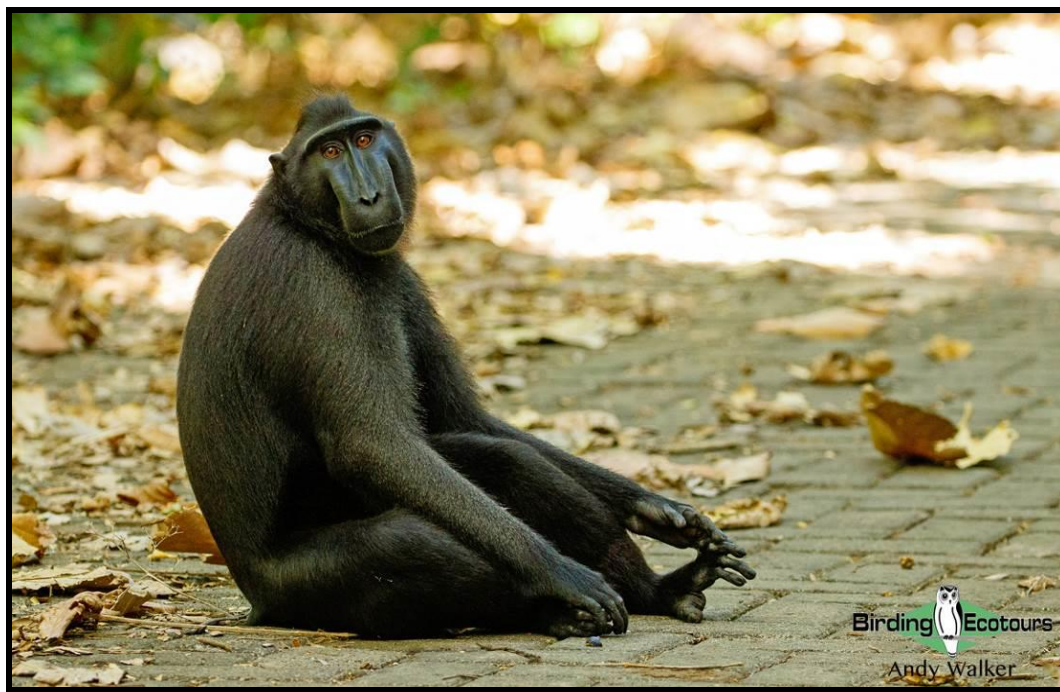
Tangkoko Batuangus Nature Reserve is practically as far north as you can go in Sulawesi, not far from the tip of the Minahassa Peninsula – the long arm that bends out from Palu in central Sulawesi (where we will find ourselves later in the tour!). The geography of this island and adjacent Halmahera is fascinating, and the birds even more so! We are sure to really enjoy ourselves over our two full days here as we look for three gorgeous endemic kingfishers: **Sulawesi Dwarf Kingfisher**, **Sulawesi Lilac Kingfisher**, and **Green-backed (Blue-headed) Kingfisher**, along with beauties such as the ginormous **Knobbed Hornbill** and smaller **Sulawesi Hornbill**, gaudy **Sulawesi Pitta**, plus so many others like **Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle**, **Sulawesi Serpent Eagle**, **Sulawesi Goshawk**, **Spot-tailed Goshawk**, **Red-backed Thrush**, **Philippine Megapode**, **Sulawesi Myna**, **White-necked Myna**, **Grosbeak Starling**, **White-rumped Triller**, **Pied Cuckooshrike**, **Sulawesi Cicadabird**, **Grey-rumped Treeswift**, **Yellow-billed Malkoha**, **Purple-winged Roller**, **Bay Coucal**, **Ashy Woodpecker**, **Black-naped Oriole**, **Hair-crested (White-eyed Spangled) Drongo**, **Isabelline Bush-hen**, **Barred Rail**, **Buff-banded Rail**, and maybe even the mythical **Blue-faced Rail**, with a big dose of luck.



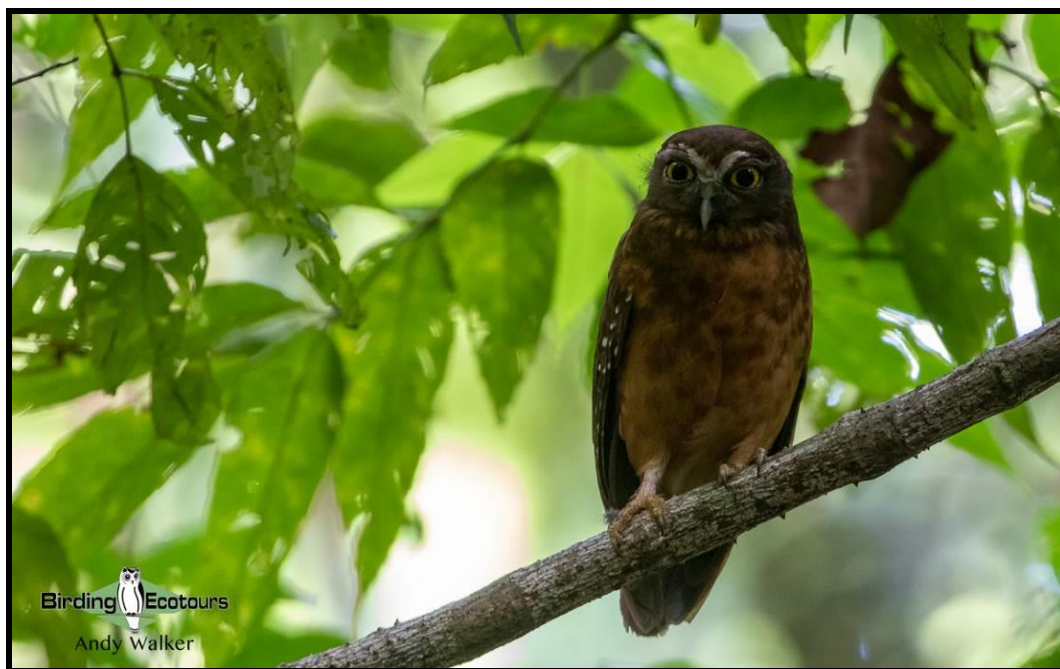
*On this tour you will see many stunningly beautiful birds, **Knobbed Hornbill** does take that up a notch, this huge bird is gorgeous.*

Parrots, pigeons, and doves are common here, and we could see **Yellow-breasted Racket-tail**, **Golden-mantled Racket-tail**, **Azure-rumped Parrot**, **Ornate Lorikeet**, **Great Hanging Parrot**, **Pygmy Hanging Parrot**, **Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeon**, **Green Imperial Pigeon**, **White-faced Cuckoo-Dove**, **Black-naped Fruit Dove**, **Oberholser's Fruit Dove**, **Superb Fruit Dove**, **Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon**, **Pink-necked Green Pigeon**, **Sultan's Cuckoo-Dove**, **Stephan's Emerald Dove**, **Spotted Dove**, and **Zebra Dove**!

The park is great for three special mammals, and we will look for the tiny **Spectral Tarsier**, the smallest monkey in the world, (Sulawesi) **Celebes (Black-) Crested Macaque**, another interesting primate, and (Sulawesi) **Bear Cuscus**, a marsupial!



The Celebes Crested Macaque is reminiscent of some of the African primates.



Endemic to Sulawesi, we will hope to find Ochre-bellied Boobook on its day roost!

Nightbirds are usually plentiful here too and **Ochre-bellied Boobook**, **Speckled Boobook**, **Minahassa Masked Owl**, **Sulawesi Scops Owl**, **Great Eared Nightjar**, and **Sulawesi Nightjar** are all possible, and we will hope to find some of these on day roosts while we are out birding in the forest and scrub.

Overnight (two nights): Tangkoko Lodge, Batuputih Bawah

Day 5. Tangkoko to Manado

After a final morning birding the wonderful Tangkoko area, we will travel back to Manado for the evening, ready for our flight to Halmahera the following morning.

Overnight: Aston Hotel, Manado (or similar)



*We will listen out for **Sulawesi Pitta** while birding at Tangkoko, and if we hear their mournful song, we will make a special effort to locate it.*

Day 6. Flight from Manado to Kao, Halmahera then on to Tobelo and Galela

After breakfast we will travel the short distance to the airport for our flight from Manado to Kao, Halmahera. We will make some roadside stops along the way to our accommodation, where we will look for **Sombre Kingfisher**, **Blue-and-white Kingfisher**, **Common Paradise Kingfisher**, **North Moluccan Pitta**, **Goliath Coucal**, **Grey-headed Fruit Dove**, **Blue-capped Fruit Dove**, **Moluccan Cuckooshrike**, **Cream-throated** (Halmahera) **White-eye**, **Halmahera Paradise-crow**, and **Halmahera Flowerpecker**.

After we arrive in Tobelo we will check in to our accommodation, have an early dinner and in the evening, we will look for **Moluccan Scops Owl** in some coconut plantations. Afterwards we

will take canoes across to a beach area to watch the highly secretive **Moluccan Megapode** tend to their nests. We will be back late to our accommodation this evening.

Overnight: Greenland Hotel, Tobelo



*Our trip to look for **Moluccan Megapode** could be a tour highlight if we are as successful as we have been on previous tours.*

Day 7. Birding Halmahera

We will leave our accommodation early with a picnic breakfast and start the long drive towards Wasile. We will stop at Gunung Roni to look for **Ivory-breasted Pitta**, **Azure Dollarbird**, **Halmahera Cuckooshrike**, **Moluccan Goshawk**, **Chattering Lory**, **Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove**, **Drab Whistler**, **White (Umbrella) Cockatoo**, **Blyth's Hornbill**, and **Gurney's Eagle**.

We will have lunch somewhere along the way, where it is convenient, there are not a lot of options along the route so it might be an early or late one depending on how the birding is going. In the afternoon we will visit Gunung Uni-uni and will bird along the roadside to Buli for **White-streaked Friarbird**, **Halmahera (Northern) Golden Bulbul**, **Dusky Megapode**, **Moluccan Drongo Cuckoo**, **Violet-necked Lory**, **Moluccan King Parrot**, **Moluccan Hanging Parrot**, and **White-naped Monarch**. In the evening (or the following morning/evening) we will look for both **Moluccan Owlet-nightjar** and **Halmahera Boobook**.

Overnight: Wisma Kita Homestay, Wasile

Day 8. Halmahera birding

We will have a very early start in order to get into place to look for the amazing (Wallace's) **Standardwing**. This bird-of-paradise does not look like much in the field guides but let us assure you when you see it in real life, it is a stunner! We will then spend the rest of the day birding around the area, targeting the special birds of Halmahera.

Overnight: Wisma Kita Homestay, Wasile



*Notice the four, white, wing standards floating about on this (Wallace's) **Standardwing**. The male makes a range of interesting noises as he hops around his display perches in the lek, flashing his blue-green breast shield (see photo in tour introduction) and wing standards.*

Day 9. Birding Halmahera

We will make our way from Wasile to Sofifi, birding along the way, and again we will be looking for birds mentioned in Days 6 and 7, as well as other species, including **Superb Fruit Dove**, **Great Cuckoo-Dove**, **Sultan's Cuckoo-Dove**, **Spectacled Imperial Pigeon**, **Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeon**, **Pied Imperial Pigeon**, **Great-billed Parrot**, **Moluccan Eclectus**, **Red-flanked Lorikeet**, **Moluccan Dwarf Kingfisher**, **Beach Kingfisher**, **Rufous-bellied Triller**, **Dusky-brown (Halmahera) Oriole**, **White-streaked Friarbird**, **Black-chinned Whistler**, **Moluccan Monarch**, **Moluccan Flycatcher**, **Rufous-necked Sparrowhawk**, **Variable Goshawk**, **Moluccan Cuckoo**, **Rufous (Gilolo) Fantail**, **Island Leaf Warbler**, **Halmahera (Northern) Golden Bulbul**, and **Long-billed Crow**. Late in the afternoon we will arrive in Sofifi, where we will catch a speedboat to Ternate ahead of spending the night there, ready for tomorrow's travel day.

Overnight: Ternate Hotel, Ternate



*We will hope for a repeat of the excellent views of **Ivory-breasted Pitta** we had here.*



*We will keep our eyes peeled for **Cream-throated (Halmahera) White-eye**.*

Day 10. Travel between Ternate and Luwuk (via Makassar, depending on flight routing)

A non-birding travel day as we fly between Ternate Island and Luwuk, in eastern Sulawesi. This journey will likely be via Makassar depending on flight schedules (announced nearer the time).

You might note the following in our hotel grounds in the late afternoon, if time permits: **Grey-sided Flowerpecker**, **Black-faced Munia**, and **Slender-billed (Sulawesi) Crow**.

Overnight: Swissbell Inn, Luwuk

Day 11. Taima – Maleo birding trip

We will have a long day today as we look for one of the most charismatic birds of Sulawesi. We will make an early start after breakfast from Luwuk in order to reach Taima on the tip of eastern central Sulawesi in the morning, where we will hope to watch a breeding colony of **Maleo** at fairly close quarters. The set up at this site is great, with jobs provided to local people who help monitor and protect the birds, which has massively reduced hunting pressure on this now Critically Endangered (BirdLife International) species. We will view the breeding area (a sandy beach that looks like it has had bombs dropped on it, due to all the nest holes dug by the birds!) from blinds and/or a tower hide depending on whether you like heights or not. We will view the nesting area and the birds in small groups, so as not to disturb them.



*The Critically Endangered (BirdLife International) **Maleo** will be our main target today.*

While in the area we will look out for other species that may be found here, such as **White-rumped Cuckooshrike**, **Sulawesi Babbler**, **Red-backed Buttonquail**, **Golden-bellied Gerygone**, **Black-naped Oriole**, **Philippine Megapode**, **Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon**, **Black-naped Fruit Dove**, **Green Imperial Pigeon**, **Isabelline Bush-hen**, **Collared Kingfisher**, **Purple-winged Roller**, **Great Hanging Parrot**, **White-breasted Woodswallow**, **Grosbeak Starling**, **Hair-crested (White-eyed Spangled) Drongo**, **Great-billed Heron**, **Sulawesi Serpent Eagle**, **Barred (Sulawesi) Honey Buzzard**, and **Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle**.

After lunch we will drive back to Luwuk, likely stopping at some roadside rice paddies along the way, if time permits. Today will be a long time in vehicles but it will be worth it, as we enjoy the spectacle of nesting **Maleo**.

Overnight: Swissbell Inn, Luwuk

Day 12. Luwuk to Palu then on to Lore Lindu

We will take a morning flight from Luwuk to Palu in central Sulawesi. On leaving the airport we will start our journey to Lore Lindu National Park, our final base for a few nights before the tour ends. Along the way we will likely stop for a few open-country birds such as **Blue-tailed Bee-eater**, **Lemon-bellied White-eye**, **White-shouldered Triller**, **Red Collared Dove**, **Pale-headed Munia**, **Black-faced Munia**, **Chestnut Munia**, and maybe even day-roosting **Savanna Nightjar**.

As we reach the Lore Lindu area we will make some roadside stops, where we might find the first of many special birds to be found here, at what is surely one of the best birding areas in Sulawesi. Some of the specials we are after include (Western) **Superb Fruit Dove**, **Red-eared Fruit Dove**, **Fiery-browed Starling**, **Sulawesi Thrush**, **Pygmy Cuckooshrike**, **Cerulean Cuckooshrike**, **Great Shortwing**, and the bizarre **Geomalia** (now considered to be an aberrant ground thrush and not a babbler as previously thought).

Overnight: Nasional Lodge, Lore Lindu Area



*(Western) **Superb Fruit Dove** provides an incredible hit of color at Lore Lindu National Park and is one of many species of pigeons and doves we can hope for on this Sulawesi and Halmahera birding tour.*

Days 13 – 14. Birding Lore Lindu National Park area (Anaso Track and Lake Tambling area)

Lore Lindu National Park protects some of the largest tracts of montane rainforests remaining on Sulawesi. We will have two full days birding here as well as the morning of Day 15. We will likely focus our birding attention on two areas while here, the famed Anaso Track (considered a tough hike) and Lake Tambling. There are a lot of new birds for us here, with potential highlights including **Hylocitrea** (the monotypic family), **Purple-bearded Bee-eater**, **Geomalia**, **Malia**, **Sulawesi Streaked Flycatcher**, **Sulawesi Woodcock**, and **Satanic Nightjar**.



Hylocitrea is in a monotypic family and is thus a big target during this tour.

Plenty of other great species here will make our birding time very exciting. The area is excellent for pigeons and doves, and we will look for **Grey-headed Imperial Pigeon**, **White-bellied Imperial Pigeon**, **Sombre Pigeon**, **Sulawesi Ground Dove**, (Western) **Superb Fruit Dove**, **Red-eared Fruit Dove**, and **Oberholser's Fruit Dove**. Additional non-passerine highlights could include **Snoring Rail**, **Purple Needletail**, **Scaly-breasted** (Lore Lindu) **Kingfisher**, **Yellow-billed Malkoha**, **Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle**, **Sulawesi Hornbill**, **Dwarf Sparrowhawk**, **Spot-tailed Sparrowhawk**, **Eastern Grass Owl**, **Speckled Boobook**, **Cinnabar Boobook** (the currently undescribed "White-spotted Boobook" form), **Sulawesi Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Golden-mantled Racket-tail**, and **Yellow-cheeked Lorikeet**. Meanwhile, passerine targets at Lore Lindu will include **Great Shortwing**, **Sulawesi Thrush**, **Red-backed Thrush**, **Rufous-throated Flycatcher**, **Blue-fronted Blue Flycatcher**, **Sulawesi Blue Flycatcher**, **Sulawesi Drongo**, **Piping Crow**, **Ivory-backed Woodswallow**, **Maroon-backed Whistler**, **Streak-headed White-eye**, **White-eared Myza**, and **Crimson-crowned Flowerpecker**.

Overnight (two nights): Nasional Lodge, Lore Lindu Area



*We hope our trek up the Anaso Track will reward us with excellent views of **Satanic Nightjar**, also known as **Diabolical Nightjar**!*

Day 15. Lore Lindu to Palu, then flight to Makassar

We will have a final morning birding around the Lore Lindu National Park area before we drive back to Palu, where we will board our afternoon flight to Makassar. We will then have our final group evening meal together.

Overnight: Harper Perintis Makassar, Makassar (or similar)

Day 16. Departure from Makassar, tour concludes

A non-birding day. The tour concludes with your departure at any time during the day (note hotel checkout is 12 noon).

Overnight: Not included

Please note that the itinerary 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, flight schedules, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration: 16 days
Group Size: 4 - 8
Dates: 15 - 30 July 2025
Start: Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport, Makassar, Indonesia
End: Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport, Makassar, Indonesia
Prices: US\$8,349 per person sharing – based on 4 - 8 participants, which includes all of the domestic flights required for the tour (2025)

Single Supplements: US\$704 (2025)

Price includes:

All domestic flights (Makassar – Manado, Manado – Kao, Ternate – Makassar, Makassar – Luwuk, Luwuk – Palu, Palu – Makassar), see important details on baggage allowances in tour-specific information (accessible from the 'General Information' tab)

All accommodation as described (based on two sharing)

Meals (from dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 16)

Drinking water – please bring a refillable water bottle

Expert tour leader

Local bird and wildlife guide/trackers fees

Birdwatching site entrance fees and travel permits

Mangrove boat tour in Tangkoko area

Speedboat travel between Sofifi and Ternate

All ground transport and tolls/taxes while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

Flights to/from Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport, Makassar, Indonesia

Expenditures due to flight cancellations/delays or other causes beyond our control (force majeure)

Visa fees if visa required

Departure tax

Items of a personal nature, e.g. porter fees, gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, excess luggage charges for internal flights (baggage limited to 44 pounds / 20 kilograms per person), etc.

Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding/sightseeing/monument excursions

Soft/alcoholic drinks

Personal travel insurance

Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))