



**BIRDING TOUR INDONESIA: WEST PAPUA AND
SOUTHWEST PAPUA – BIRDS-OF-PARADISE AND
ENDEMIC OF THE ARFAK MOUNTAINS AND WAIGEO
ISLAND**

TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



Red Bird-of-paradise displaying is a real treat to watch.

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

This amazing, once-in-a-lifetime tour focuses on the multitude of endemic birds that can be found in West Papua and this includes numerous simply spectacular birds-of-paradise (BoPs), including possibly *the* best-looking bird in the world, **Wilson’s Bird-of-paradise**. This tour starts in Manokwari and ends in Sorong. We take in the excellent Arfak Mountains, home to loads of restricted-range “Vogelkop Endemics”, such as **Arfak Arthropia**, **Crescent-caped Lophorina**, **Western Parotia**, **Long-tailed Paradigalla**, and **Vogelkop Bowerbird**, along with more widespread (in New Guinea) **Black Sickbill**, **Magnificent Bird-of-paradise**, **Spotted Jewel-babbler**, **Masked Bowerbird**, and so many more. While in the Sorong area, we will visit the Raja Ampat Islands (specifically Waigeo) and the recently explored Klasow Valley (also known to birders as Malagufuk) and this leg of the trip gives us the opportunity for the aforementioned **Wilson’s Bird-of-paradise**, along with **King Bird-of-paradise**, **Red Bird-of-paradise**, **Lesser Bird-of-paradise**, **Magnificent Riflebird**, **Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher**, **Western Crowned Pigeon**, **Thick-billed Ground Pigeon**, **Papuan Pitta**, and **Hook-billed Kingfisher**. This is just a tiny sample of what’s on offer on this tour, please refer to the detailed itinerary for further details.

Note that in November/December 2022, the Indonesian government split West Papua province into two provinces, West Papua (in the east), with the capital city of Manokwari) and Southwest Papua (to the northwest of West Papua!) with the capital city of Sorong. Within this document we retain the term “West Papua” to refer to both provinces.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

This West Papua, Indonesia birdwatching tour requires reasonable physical fitness and good agility to bird the relatively steep slopes found here (even at coastal locations). West Papua is one of the most remote and undeveloped areas within Indonesia, so remember you are visiting a developing country and will be camping/staying in the most remote areas, where there are no proper sanitation facilities. Expect many things to be very different from home, or even other parts of Indonesia.

We will shift our body clocks on this tour rising very early but sleeping early too. While we are birding in the Arfak Mountains, we will usually have breakfast around 05:00 hrs., or earlier, to then get onto the trails and into bird blinds where we will wait for the birds-of-paradise to arrive (they usually display around first light or sometimes late in the afternoon). We will therefore usually be walking on the trails in the dark or half-light, so we can get into position before the birds do. After our early morning session in the bird blinds, we will do some forest birding on the trails and roads nearby until mid-morning. We will usually take lunch around 11:00 hrs., before a siesta during the middle part of the day. In the middle of the afternoon, we will have another birding session before it gets dark, after which we will have an early dinner, checklist session, and then showers and bed. There is no electricity in the mountains, other than that supplied by the generator, which usually gets turned off around 21:00 hrs. When we are birding on Waigeo we will follow a similar pattern of activity and when in Sorong we will have a very early start as we leave the hotel at around 04:00-04:30hrs. to get to a forest patch for our birding there, either

having an early breakfast before we leave the hotel or taking a boxed breakfast away with us.

Most birding occurs on narrow, sometimes swampy forest trails, and other times we will bird from wider roads and tracks that are often uneven and can be slippery. On the trails care must be taken as there are trip and slip hazards from damp roots, fallen trees, boulders, and uneven and rough surfaces. In the Klasow Valley we walk along a boardwalk that can be slippery if wet, so care should be taken at all times, with one hand on or near the handrail.

Walking sticks or hiking poles are a great idea as they provide added stability to help with balance and are **compulsory** for anyone who is not steady at walking and highly recommended for everyone no matter of ability. Most trails are either going up or down due to the nature of the terrain we will be birding in. Our local porters are excellent at helping those less physically active at getting around the trails and into position to view the birds. When we are in the lower areas of the Arfak Mountains, and on Waigeo all our birding is carried out from our accommodation bases, so these walks can be optional if you'd like to take a rest for some of them. We have more than one chance for most of the birds-of-paradise (and other excellent birds) at these locations, so sitting a session out does not mean you will necessarily miss something totally.

We will also spend time within small bird blinds (which are often not particularly comfortable and may entail sitting on the ground or small stools) to get close to the various birds-of-paradise's lekking/display sites. Any minor temporary discomfort will be well worth it when a **Black Sicklebill, Western Parotia, or Magnificent Bird-of-paradise** drops into view.

The village in the Arfak Mountains, makes a great base for walks of a few hours. These walks can, in sections, be tough, but we will take them slowly and we will have time to rest back in the village afterwards. The only activity different to the above scenario is the hike to the top of the Arfak Mountains. This is considered a very tough hike (both going up and coming back down), with further tough hiking when we reach the top to look for the birds themselves. This trek should only be carried out by those of a good fitness level (please [contact us](#) if you would like to discuss whether you think you will be able to do this hike). If you don't want to do the mountain hike and basic camping at the top of the mountain (see further details in the "Accommodation" section below), it will be possible for you to stay behind in the village where you will be suitably looked after while the rest of the group head up the mountain for one night.

For our time birding in the Klasow Valley, we will hike along a relatively flat (but often slippery) boardwalk in usually hot and humid conditions.

Note that in each year the specific locations of the birds-of-paradise lek sites may change due to numerous factors beyond our control. Sometimes birds can be found displaying next to nice easy access points with very limited and simple walking of around 10-30 minutes, but at other times they can be further away and take much more effort to reach, sometime involving a walk on difficult terrain for an hour or so. We will try and provide as much information ahead of each hike for each specific bird-of-paradise lek site, to help you know what to expect and make any decisions on whether you want to miss a particular hike. When possible, we will take the easiest option, but sometimes the easiest option can also result in a fair bit of effort to reach.

In any reading you may have done on visiting West Papua, you may have seen reference to a requirement for a Surat Jalan (police clearance) for visiting the province. This is no longer required, however, please note that immigration officers at your first point of entry into

Indonesia (such as Jakarta, Makassar, or Denpasar) are not always well-informed about West Papua and can be sensitive about this province, so if possible don't even mention you are going there. Over recent years the Raja Ampat Islands have increased massively in both domestic and international tourism circles due to the excellent diving on offer, so an increase in visitors has made the area more well-known for tourism and tourists are a more familiar sight than they once were.

This is a fairly tough tour and unfortunately will not be suitable for everyone, though we try and make the birding as accessible to everyone as possible as we know that the birds-of-paradise and multitude of other spectacular and range-restricted birds are highly desired by birdwatchers the world over. The information within this document will hopefully help in your preparation for this tour and please do contact us if you have any specific requests for further information. We have helped many people see the birds of New Guinea who maybe thought they had missed their opportunity. While being physically fit will increase your enjoyment and participation in this tour we are also able to help those less active to get the most out of this tour, largely thanks to our extremely helpful local team who go above and beyond to work with everyone. The local people here are incredibly proud of their forests and their birds, and they love to share these with us. Tourism to this area provides valuable income for the villagers as well as protects the forest for the birds and future generations.

We recommend that if you decide to join this tour (no matter your fitness level) that you work on your physical fitness prior to it, hiking up and down hills/steps is a good way to prepare.

TRANSPORTATION

We use a wide range of transport on the tour. Most of the driving is carried out in 4x4 vehicles (such as Toyota Hilux or similar) and depending on the final group size we may have between one and four vehicles for our birding expedition. We require that you are fit and flexible and can maneuver yourself into these high-clearance vehicles. We ask everyone to please be aware of the amount of extra equipment they bring into the seating area of the vehicles as there will not be much room (excess luggage can go in the back of the pickup). Most of the roads away from the towns are rough and windy (bring motion sickness tablets if you suffer from motion sickness) and at times this can be a little uncomfortable, however it is the only way to get to some of these remote birding places, so it's worth the effort when you see the amazing birds!

We will fly across the island between Manokwari and Sorong (see the "Domestic Flights" section below). We will take several boat trips during the tour when we are in the Sorong area. This includes a fast-ferry crossing between Sorong and Waigeo and back. On these crossings, which last approximately two hours each way, we have seats in an air-conditioned (usually rather cold) cabin. There is no opportunity to birdwatch from the ferry. We will take a speedboat trip around some of the smaller islands in the area one afternoon and will bird from the boat around several islands that we can't land on, and then access others that we can do. Accessing the speedboat or ferry may require climbing up or down a ladder onto/off a pier. One island we may visit would require a "wet landing".

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

This tour requires a domestic flight between Manokwari and Sorong. **The cost for this flight is included in the tour cost.** The domestic flight is likely to have a hold luggage weight limit of 44 pounds (20 kilograms) and a hand luggage allowance of 15 pounds (7 kilograms) and will be with whichever local airline fits our schedule best on the day we need it, this might be one of Lion Air Indonesia, Batik Air, Garuda Indonesia, or Sriwijaya Air. Any overweight baggage will likely incur costs and will be the responsibility of the individual. Excess baggage costs will need to be paid in cash to the airline at the airport.

LUGGAGE

Please pack as lightly as possible for this tour (noting the expected weight allowance of the domestic flight detailed above). A medium, soft-sided, and robust duffle bag is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles. 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.

Note we usually spend one night camping in basic facilities higher in the Arfak Mountains than our basic village base lower down the slope, where we spend most of our nights while birding the area. For this one night you will need an overnight bag, this could be your day pack, or should be another small bag large enough for what you might need for one night (noting we will be at elevation so will require warmer clothes etc.). We must hike to the overnight spot, but our porters (for a nominal charge) can carry whatever we take up the mountain and we usually leave the remaining, and majority of, our luggage with our team back at our main base. Note you can also leave luggage in the hotel in Manokwari and take a smaller set of items to the mountain.

If you are not planning on hiking up to the top of the mountain (see information in the “Daily Activities, Physical Requirements, and Tour Pace” and “Accommodation” sections) then you don’t need to worry about bringing something for carrying luggage to the top of the mountain.

SAFETY

Your safety is our paramount concern on this, and all of our tours, hence the detailed information contained within this tour-specific information and the Indonesia general information. Our tour takes us to a remote part of Indonesia, and then to a remote part of West Papua too.

Political tensions in West Papua province have previously given rise to mass demonstrations in cities like Manokwari and Sorong. We monitor local news media as well as keep in regular contact with our various local guides and ground team (who live in these cities) to keep on top of potential security threats. Sometimes there are difficulties with internet connections and communications may be limited (i.e. they are cut off to prevent demonstrators being able to keep in contact to plan further disruption). We will keep clear of any and all protests, demonstrations, and political rallies to the best of our abilities as they can turn violent without warning.

Care should be taken when we are at the port in Sorong as there are a lot of people milling around trying to get paid for loading/unloading the boat and petty theft (e.g. pickpockets etc.) can be a concern as we are likely to stand out rather a lot. It will be important that the group stays closely together and maintains a tight hold of all personal equipment with eyes on bags and personal possessions etc. Please listen to the advice of your local guide or tour leader here.

Similarly, care should be taken when passing through the airports, there is often lots of people standing around outside these and similar issues could be possible. Please do not go walking around outside the city hotels on your own as you could become a target of crime. Please speak to us if there is any need for you to go outside of the hotel (such as going to a shop to purchase a SIM card or snacks) as we will have someone we know accompany you.

Trips and falls when on trails, tracks/roads, around our campsites, and getting into or out of the 4x4 vehicles or boats are all possibilities on this tour and care should be taken. A hiking pole or walking stick is compulsory if you are at all unsure on your feet. Please seek the services of one of our excellent porters who will be able to help you navigate the sometimes steep and slippery trails. They are excellent and have helped many clients safely get around these remote birding sites. We do not have access to a satellite phone and regular cell coverage is limited when we are away from the cities. The nearest good emergency medical facilities in the case of a serious emergency might be in Australia (e.g. Darwin) so make sure you have suitable medical insurance in case something unexpected occurs.

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and flooding are frequent across Indonesia and we will be monitoring the situation in the lead up to, and during the tour. Be aware that a volcanic eruption far away from the tour location can cause travel (flight) disruption, e.g. if a volcano erupts in or near the Indonesian international airports in Bali or Java.

There is a high risk of malaria in West Papua. Atovaquone/Proguanil or Doxycycline, or Mefloquine are recommended, but please consult your doctor or local travel clinic for specific advice. We will be spending time birding in lowland forests and mangroves over the dawn and dusk periods, where we will come into contact with mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are also present in the Arfak Mountains and can be a pest when we try and sit quietly in the bird blinds for the birds-of-paradise. Insect repellent with a high DEET concentration can be useful for keeping them away and reducing the chance of getting bites. DEET insect spray can also keep chiggers and leeches away. Chiggers can lead to Scrub (Bush) Typhus and can be incredibly irritating. Leeches do not spread diseases, but they are rather unnerving and can cause blood loss.

Care should be taken when swimming and snorkeling in the Raja Ampat Islands. The reef life is spectacular and some of the best diving in the world, with the highest diversity of fish anywhere on earth. However, with this comes serious danger in the form of creatures such **Australian Box Jellyfish** (Sea Wasp) and “Blue-ringed Octopus”. Please consult with the dive resort experts prior to taking a swim and follow any health and safety advice they provide.

WEATHER/CLIMATE

While in the lowlands of Manokwari, Sorong, and Waigeo we can expect average daytime highs of around 87 °F (30 °C) and average nighttime lows of 75 °F (24 °C). There is often thick cloud cover here, resulting in hot and humid, rather oppressive conditions.

In the mountains it is cooler than the lowland temperatures and we can expect average daytime highs of around 65 °F (18 °C) and average nighttime lows of 50 °F (10 °C) when we are birding around our middle elevation sites of 4,500 feet/1,400 meters. When we reach the higher parts of the mountain, e.g. when we camp overnight at 7,000 feet/2,200 meters, we can expect lower temperatures again, and overnight temperature can feel relatively cold.

The sun is strong at this time of year and care should be taken to remain hydrated and use sun

protection. Rain is possible at any time, at any location so rain gear and an umbrella will be essential. A dry bag is also recommended for protecting optics, electrical equipment/cameras, and important documents (see the “What to Bring: Clothing and Other Items” section below).

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels in Manokwari and Sorong are typical western-style hotels with good facilities, restaurants, television, Wi-Fi internet, air-conditioning etc., and where you can get laundry done. There are supermarkets and pharmacies in the towns if you find you have forgotten something essential. Tea and coffee facilities are provided in rooms.

When you stay in the village in the Arfak Mountains (at an elevation of approximately 4,500 feet/1,400 meters), it is basic accommodation with electricity from a generator early in the morning and in the evening only (but enough to allow charging of phones/camera batteries etc.). Rooms are small bungalow-type buildings with, usually, a couple of bedrooms which are basic, and consist of beds with a mosquito net, a table, and an outside bench on the porch to soak in the astonishing views and birds. We will provide you with a sleeping bag and pillow. Most rooms now (as of May 2023) have showers with hot water. There are western-style sit-down toilets located in the toilet/shower room (which may be outside of the bungalow). We bring a cook up to the village with us and so still have very nice local meals during our stay. It is also possible to get laundry done here. Tea and coffee facilities are provided in a communal dining area. There is no Wi-Fi and very limited phone signal here.

When you hike up the mountains, you camp at 7,000 feet/2,200 meters in a very basic wooden room, and it gets even more basic than in the village. Essentially, we lay out a sleeping mat and sleeping bag in a communal shelter - with rustic pit/drop toilets, no showers, more basic food etc. We will provide you with a sleeping bag and sleeping mat (more comfortable if this is on the wooden floor). You should bring a travel pillow if you would like one. It is also cooler and damper at the top of the mountain where we spend the night, and it takes a full morning to walk up there (birding along a steep trail along the way). There is no electricity at the campsite, or a generator, so if you need to charge batteries you will need to have a power bank (portable power supply) to do so. We usually only stay at this upper campsite for one night. While this accommodation, or the trek to get there, is not going to be suitable for everyone, it is definitely worth the effort and temporary discomfort to try and see some of the special endemics that only occur high up the mountain (such as **Arfak Astrapia**, **Black Sicklebill**, and many more). Tea and coffee facilities are provided in the communal dining tent. See note in “Luggage” section regarding bringing a smaller bag for the overnight trip up the mountain. There is no Wi-Fi and very limited phone signal here.

There is a nominal charge for porters to carry daypacks, overnight bags, and other belongings, and this can be booked a day or two before the trek, when you first arrive in the village (you spend a couple of nights before (and after) the trek up the mountain, in the village at a lower altitude. You are also encouraged to tip the villagers for this service at your discretion (they also do a lot of other hard work for the group, e.g. heating water, making meals, etc.), and will help on the trails if you need help walking on the rough terrain, or if you want your daypacks carried.

In Waigeo, we usually stay in a simple dive resort near our main birding sites. Rooms have a fan and/or air-conditioning, mosquito net, and simple private bathroom facilities. Tea, coffee, and

drinking water facilities are provided in the restaurant area. There is excellent snorkeling or diving off the accommodation. There is occasionally Wi-Fi in the dining room and there is now phone signal here, but it is erratic so not totally reliable. The dive resort is either reached by boat from the sea or via the nearest road by a set of c.70 steep steps with a handrail. Meals are usually of local style with plenty of freshly sourced fish and generally served buffet style.

ELECTRICITY

While we are in the Arfak Mountains we will not have any mains electricity. For our time in the village in the Arfaks (where we will spend most of our nights in the mountains) there will be limited electricity supplied by a generator. This is usually on in the early hours of the morning over breakfast and then for a few hours in the evening while we eat, do the checklist, get cleaned up, and get ready for bed. This is usually enough time to get camera and phone batteries charged up. When we go high up the mountain to our campsite there is no form of electricity at all, not even a generator. Therefore, if you think you will want/need to charge any electrical equipment you should bring a power bank (portable power supply). Make sure any power bank is certified safe for air travel as these items are likely to be inspected and checked over at airport security checkpoints (they have to go in hand luggage) and if they do not meet the required safety standards they are likely to be confiscated.

All other locations we visit on the tour should have a regular power supply, notwithstanding any unexpected power cuts etc.

COMMUNICATIONS

Phone signal is limited (or absent) for most of the tour route, except for around the cities of Manokwari and Sorong. You may be able to use your international roaming package in Indonesia, but it may be quite expensive to do so. You may be able to purchase a local SIM card, however this can be quite complicated (e.g. if you purchase a card on a different island it might not work on other islands, without adding specific “local” credit through topping up a balance at a convenience store in cash and the Indonesian government are bringing in new rules all the time about what foreigners are allowed to do in regards to phone/internet access). If you think you are going to need phone signal – where it exists – during the tour, please let us know as we might be able to purchase SIM cards in advance depending on the current rules in place, which do change from time to time. Our hotels in Manokwari and Sorong, and the dive resort in Waigeo (usually) have Wi-Fi and this might be the most convenient way to go about communicating with the outside world during the tour if you should wish to do so.

FOOD AND MEALS

In the cities and tourist areas (e.g. Manokwari and Sorong) we will eat in the hotel restaurants where most types of food (Western and Indonesian) and drinks will be available. Meals will become simpler as we move into the mountains while birding the Arfak Mountains, and there will be no alcoholic drinks (unless we bring our own with us). Our accommodation on Waigeo provides home-cooked Western and Indonesian meals served buffet style.

We can accommodate vegetarian and special dietary needs if we know in advance. Most meals

are based around chicken or fish with rice and noodles, and mixed vegetables, tempeh, and tofu. Fresh fruit will be available in most places. Due to the lack of refrigeration, dairy products are not common. We suggest you bring your favorite snacks or protein bars to supplement your diet.

MONEY

Getting money out of ATMs on this tour in Manokwari and Sorong can sometimes be difficult. 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. You are likely to have time to do that prior to catching your onward flight to Manokwari, such as when you are in Jakarta, Makassar, or Denpasar, where ATMs are plentiful.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

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

1. A field guide to the region. Either of the following books are suitable. Our tour leader will have digital copies of each.
 - a. **Birds of New Guinea: Including Bismarck Archipelago and Bougainville** – Phil Gregory (2017), Lynx Edicions. This field guide has a clear and modern layout and current take on New Guinea, but is only available as a hardback and is expensive.
 - b. **Birds of New Guinea** – Thane K Pratt and Bruce M Beehler (2014), Princeton University Press, 2nd Edition. This field guide is older and more ‘arty’ than the above guide with some plates tough to follow, but is a softback and is affordable.
2. Overnight bag (small rucksack) for stay in the Arfak Mountains, either one that is used for the time in the mountains, or just for the one night at the higher elevation campsite.
3. Hiking pole or walking stick to help on the tracks and trails. **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.
4. Torch (flashlight) and/or headlamp (headtorch), and spare batteries – we will be camping overnight in the mountains with no electricity and at our base lower down the mountains we will not have electricity between c.21:00 – 05:00 hrs. Additionally we will likely be setting off into the forest when it is still dark, so this is essential kit, with a headlamp (headtorch) allowing hands to be kept free to hold walking poles etc.
5. High concentration DEET insect repellent.
6. Anti-malarial tablets.
7. Leech socks may be useful, particularly if it is wet.
8. A small personal first aid kit. See the suggested items from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [here](#). There are pharmacies in Manokwari and Sorong, but we will only have limited access to these, so it is always best to bring some basic essentials with you.
9. Footwear is a matter of personal preference. Rubber boots are probably essential in muddy conditions and often dry out quickly, but often lack suitable ankle support which

can be given by walking/hiking boots (especially useful on the hike up the Arfak Mountains). If you don't mind getting dirty in favor of better ankle support, go with walking boots. If it is particularly wet during the tour it may be possible to purchase rubber boots in Manokwari before heading up the mountain, if there is time/availability of your size. A set of sandals/flip flops/trainers would be useful for walking around some of the accommodation, such as the beach resort.

10. Quick-drying birding clothes (i.e. suitable forest colors) are the best for this tour and a good selection of clothing layers are also recommended for time at the higher elevations where temperatures will be much lower than in the lowlands (see the "Weather/Climate" section for further information on likely temperatures during the tour).
11. Something warm to sleep in when in the mountains as the temperatures do drop and the basic rooms can get cold.
12. Rain jacket (and small umbrella) and a coat/fleece for the time in the mountains.
13. Swimwear, mask, and snorkel for optional swimming during free time in Waigeo (note that equipment can be hired from the dive resort, so you don't need to bring your own if you don't want to or are limited for space in your luggage – there is likely to be a small charge (c.US\$10-20) for hiring any equipment and this should be paid in cash in local currency).
14. A small hand towel or wash cloth can be handy for cleaning and drying things when in the rainforest. Not essential but handy.
15. A dry bag to keep valuable documents in such as passports, cell phones, wallets etc., as well as cameras if it rains.
16. Power bank – essential if you want to charge items while camping as there will be no electricity at all in some areas – e.g. higher parts of the Arfak Mountains, and limited electricity during the daytime lower down the mountain (see the section on "Electricity" above for further information).
17. A travel pillow and travel bath (i.e. large) towel for time in the Arfak Mountains. We will provide other camping gear, such as a sleeping bag and a sleeping mat/roll mat. If you would prefer to use your own camping equipment, please feel to bring it along.
18. A mosquito/fly net might be useful for use at the top campsite in the mountains, to keep creepy crawlies off you at night.