



**INDONESIA: SULAWESI AND HALMAHERA –  
SPECTACULAR ENDEMIC BIRDING**

**TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**



*Knobbed Hornbill is one of the best-looking hornbills in the world and is endemic to Sulawesi.*

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

This is an absolutely thrilling endemic-packed birding tour covering the two Indonesian provinces of Sulawesi and Halmahera. This tour starts and ends in Makassar, South Sulawesi and visits some of the best birdwatching sites in the whole of Indonesia. The list of possible birds on this tour is extraordinary and includes **Maleo**, (Wallace's) **Standardwing** (a stunning bird-of-paradise), **Ivory-breasted Pitta**, **Hylocitrea** (a monotypic family), **Satanic Nightjar**, **Moluccan Owlet-nightjar**, **Purple-bearded Bee-eater**, **Knobbed Hornbill**, and a plethora of fruit doves, pigeons, parrots, owls, kingfishers, and more (see the [detailed itinerary](#) for a mouthwatering read!). The habitats we cover are varied and loads of the birds will give excellent views and good incidental photos of many will be possible. The landscapes we will see from land, water, and the sky are spectacular, particularly if you like staggering volcanoes cloaked in rainforests and palm-fringed coastlines with beautiful beaches and mangroves.

**DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE**

This Sulawesi and Halmahera birding tour needs reasonable fitness and agility as the tour, by its nature, covering such a large area, goes at a fairly quick pace with the focus on finding as many of the endemic birds and regional specials as possible. There are many early starts, late finishes, and long days.

Some of the areas we are birding in are fairly remote, even by Indonesian standards, Halmahera more so than Sulawesi. It will be important to remember that you are visiting a developing country and will be staying in remote areas, where there are limited sanitation facilities. Expect many things to be very different from home, or even other parts of Indonesia. Notwithstanding the above, we have tried to make this tour as comfortable as possible by staying in trusted accommodation that is of the highest standard in the local area, so that the free time between birding sessions is as comfortable and relaxing as possible, but note this may still be quite basic in some places (such as at Lore Lindu and on Halmahera particularly). The closure of Weda Dive Resort in Halmahera is a real shame (for visitors to the island, the local bird guides who used to work there, and the birds), and has made visiting Halmahera tougher.

The nature of travel in this part of Indonesia requires multiple internal flights and/or long drives to get to the different birding spots. This can be rather tiring at times. 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. 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).

While the majority of the birding is carried out on roads and flat tracks, some of these occur at elevation and some are interspersed with steep inclines and declines. Several of the trails can be swampy and wet (even in the dry season) and can be slippery. One hike in Sulawesi, along the famed Anaso Track in the spectacular Lore Lindu National Park, is considered difficult. It's not

particularly steep (as like some of the trails on our West Papua tour), but it is long and tiring (c. three miles / five kilometers each way). 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. We take this track slowly as we will be birding along the way, so most people should be able to manage it given the slow pace we will be walking. In Halmahera, the hiking for the (Wallace's) **Standardwing** lek is considered a tough hike. The location visited might change each year but in 2022, visiting the lek required a tough downhill hike for around 30-minutes, with a tough hike back up (taking longer) afterwards, particularly when the heat and humidity have been added to the equation. Our local guides are always on the lookout for easier to reach lek sites and we will choose the best one available during the time of our visit.

On some occasions we have need to venture “off-piste”, for example if we need to look for a roosting owl, a hornbill nest, a bird-of-paradise lek, or a pitta – the sort of birds unlikely to be seen right from the trail. We have local guides and other support staff with us, so if at any time anyone in the group wants to opt out of an activity that will be possible, and we will give you as much information ahead of time as we can.

The weather is likely to be hot and humid for most of the tour (except for time at elevation, but even here it shouldn't feel particularly cold), this can make the birding tiring. The tour is scheduled for the dry season, but rain can fall at any time in this area.

### TRANSPORTATION AND SEAT ROTATION

We use several forms of transport on the tour. During the tour we will likely use a range of minibuses of varying sizes, and sometimes 4x4 vehicles. The common 4x4 in this part of the world is the Toyota Hilux, so we are likely to use those, or similar. We require that you are fit and flexible and can maneuver yourself into (and out of) these high-clearance vehicles.

During our time in vehicles, we operate a rotation policy so that everyone has the same opportunities with seating positions. All participants will be expected to honor this. Issues such as suffering from motion sickness will not excuse you from this policy, so please bring medication if you think this could be an issue for you. Some of the roads we will be driving along will be windy and are rough in places. We also 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 extra space. Some of the drives between cities/airports and our accommodation/birding sites will be up to four or five hours. Typically, we will drive to an area, stay there for a few nights and thoroughly explore it before moving to the next place, so there are limited one-night stays in our itinerary, though occasionally these are needed to work with domestic flights, of which there are at least six on this tour (see “Domestic Flights” below, for specifics).

We will use a speedboat to get between Halmahera and Ternate (before a flight to Sulawesi) and we will take a smaller outrigger boat for a mangrove boat trip in Sulawesi. The speedboat between the two islands involves proper harbors but might include climbing up or down a ladder or walking across other boats, and so a bit of agility might be required, though boat crews and local guides will be able to help here. This trip can last between 30-60 minutes depending on the tide/weather and there are no opportunities for birding off the speedboat (there is little to be expected from the crossing really) and it might be bumpy. The boat trip to the mangroves is a birding trip. It may result in wet/sandy feet as we enter and exit the boat on the beach at the start

and end of the trip, which usually lasts a couple of hours. We ride the boat from the beach along the coastline before turning into a river mouth where we spend most of the time looking for birds in the mangroves.

## DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

This Indonesian birding tour starts and ends in Makassar, however there are multiple (at least six) domestic flights required. See the tour map tab for a better understanding of the tour route. The costs for these domestic flights are included in the tour cost. The domestic flights are as follows: Makassar – Manado, Manado – Kao, Ternate – Makassar, Makassar – Luwuk, Luwuk – Palu, and Palu – Makassar. Domestic flights in Indonesia usually have a hold luggage weight limit of 44 pounds (20 kilograms) with a hand luggage allowance of 15 pounds (7 kilograms). Overweight baggage will likely incur additional costs and will be the responsibility of the individual to pay, these costs will need to be paid for in cash to the airline while at the airport, and often take some time, so adhering to the baggage allowance is best for everyone in the group to prevent undue stress for everyone. Note the itinerary may change if flight schedules change at all, which is beyond our control, of course.

## LUGGAGE

Please note the expected maximum weight allowances for the domestic flights. Due to the route we take, all luggage will need to be carried for the duration of the tour and luggage cannot be left somewhere to be picked up later, so should not exceed this weight. Please therefore pack as lightly as possible. A medium, soft-sided, strong duffel bag (not the hard-sided cases) is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles (noting that this will include minibuses, 4x4 vehicles, 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 acceptable to fit in the overhead luggage compartments in planes too.

## SAFETY

Your safety is our paramount concern on all our tours, that's why we try and provide you with as much thorough general and tour-specific information as possible ahead of the tour, which in this case visits very remote areas in Indonesia.

The political situation in Central Sulawesi (where we visit when birding Lore Lindu National Park) is considered “unsettled” by the United Kingdom government (and see also US government information here), and includes Palu, Poso, and Tentena. These areas have the potential for politically motivated violence. We will keep clear of all protests, demonstrations, and political rallies as they can turn violent without warning. There is ongoing conflict between Indonesian security forces and terrorists in the vicinity of Lore Lindu National Park. The conflict is predominantly concentrated in the Sigi, Parigi Moutong, and Poso Regions. From time-to-time areas of the national park can be closed totally or restricted and possible only with armed guards. We keep in frequent contact with our local guides who live in the area for the latest news. When birding in this area, our activities will be based on the current situation. From time to time the Anaso Track can be closed by the police and obviously if that happens it is beyond our control.

Care should be taken when in cities, airports, and ports where petty theft (e.g. pickpockets etc.) can be a concern. If you want to go walking around outside the city hotels when in Makassar or Palu (such as for going to a shop to purchase a SIM card or some snacks), please be aware of your surroundings. The pavements are often dangerous with uncovered drains.

Trips and falls when on trails, tracks/roads, 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 boggy or slippery in the forest, which can occur even during the dry season. A walking stick or 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.

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and flooding are frequent across Indonesia, the country sits on the “Ring of Fire”. 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 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. Sulawesi and Halmahera have a low malaria risk (consult your doctor or travel clinic), but prevention of bites is recommended. DEET insect spray can also keep chiggers and leeches away. Chiggers, especially prevalent at Tangkoko National Park, can lead to Scrub (Bush) Typhus and can be incredibly irritating as well as potentially leading to medical complications. Leeches do not spread diseases, but they are rather unsettling, and can cause blood loss. Rubber boots can help with reducing issues with chiggers and leeches.

When in Tangkoko National Park we will (hopefully) enjoy seeing and photographing the (Sulawesi) **Celebes (Black-) Crested Macaque**. Although these monkeys sometimes allow a close approach, they are totally wild animals and should be treated as such. When viewing monkeys, let them approach you on their own terms. If you stoop down and avoid looking directly in their eyes, they will be less aggressive. Do not chase or pursue monkeys and never feed them. No matter how innocent they may look, wild monkeys bite and can carry dangerous diseases and the nearest decent hospital is over a two-hour drive away.

## WEATHER/CLIMATE

While in the lowlands of Sulawesi we can expect average daytime highs of around 85–95 °F (30–35 °C) and average nighttime lows of 70–75 °F (21–24 °C), it could be a touch hotter when in Halmahera. Although there is often a lot of cloud cover at this time of year, the sun is strong, and care should be taken to remain hydrated and use sun protection to reduce the chance of sunburn. It can be very humid in both Sulawesi and Halmahera.

In the mountains (e.g. at Lore Lindu National Park in Sulawesi) it is cooler than the lowland temperatures and we can expect average daytime highs of around 68–77 °F (20–25 °C) and average nighttime lows of 50–59 °F (10–15 °C). Note we don’t actually stay overnight in the mountain, we stay in the nearby valley, so nighttime temperatures at the accommodation are not as cold as in the mountains, but cooler than other locations we stay overnight.

Rain is possible at any time, at any location so rain gear and an umbrella will be useful. 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) in the case of an



unexpected thunderstorm and downpour.

## ACCOMMODATION

All accommodation has been chosen for its proximity to excellent birding locations while still providing an adequate level of comfort, where possible. While in Sulawesi we stay in accommodation ranging from good hotels in the towns and cities, such as in Makassar, Manado, and Luwuk, to more basic yet comfortable lodges catering for birders when at Tangkoko National Park and at Lore Lindu National Park.

All accommodation in Sulawesi, apart from that at Lore Lindu National Park (where it is not necessary) has air conditioning. All accommodation has western style toilets and en suite bathrooms (these are basic at Lore Lindu National Park) and are clean and comfortable. Hotels in the cities have Wi-Fi and there is phone signal. There is no Wi-Fi and very limited phone signal when we stay near Tangkoko National Park. There is no Wi-Fi or phone signal when we stay near Lore Lindu National Park (but there is phone signal in the national park near the headquarters due to a recently installed mast) and the electricity might go off here during the daytime. Most of the city hotels have swimming pools (e.g., Makassar, Manado, and Luwuk).

In Halmahera, since the sad closure of Weda Dive Resort, we have had to change our accommodation choice. We now stay in a couple of basic homestays and/or basic hotels as there is limited choice in the areas we will be staying. The quality of the accommodation is considered lower than that in Sulawesi. The accommodation we use have private basic en-suite facilities and all have fans or air-conditioning. In Ternate we stay in a hotel in the city that is one of the best available with air-conditioning or a fan.

The beds in most places we stay usually have thin and hard mattresses, as is typical in many Asian countries.

## ELECTRICITY

The electricity is likely to go off at our accommodation at Lore Lindu National Park during the middle of the day, but we should not have issues elsewhere, unless something unexpected happens, such as a thunderstorm taking out the supply somewhere.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Phone signal is limited (or absent) for some of the tour route, particularly when we are in Tangkoko National Park and when on Halmahera. You may be able to use an international phone roaming package while in Indonesia, but it may be expensive. You can purchase a local SIM card for use in Indonesia when at the airport, however it can be a complex process and the rules over foreigners using local SIM cards changes all the time. If you purchase a SIM card on a different island it might not work on other islands, without adding specific “local” data/credit, this needs to be done at a convenience store in cash. If you are going to need phone signal – where there is some – 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 without warning. It might be simpler to rely on Wi-Fi when we are passing through airports and staying in city

hotels, such as in Makassar, Manado, Luwuk, and Ternate, etc., or using your international SIM with a suitable roaming package.

## FOOD AND MEALS

Food is of local Indonesian style in most places. The majority of the food on the tour is rather basic. Some of the larger hotels in the towns and cities may have more western style food (or a local take on what that should be and varies in quality depending on location), but this is not necessarily to be expected. Bringing energy/cereal bars might be advantageous for during early morning hikes. When we are in remote parts of Sulawesi, such as Lore Lindu National Park, and the duration of our time in Halmahera and Ternate, food will be basic to very basic.

Please remember to give us your dietary preferences. Are you vegetarian? Can you eat spicy foods, etc.? In some areas we visit (particularly on Halmahera) it will be difficult to find decent vegetarian food.

We will have quite a few early starts on this tour and so breakfasts in hotels are likely to be early, as a consequence though, on some occasions we might have a boxed breakfast. Most of the time, we will have lunch back at our accommodation or a nearby restaurant, though we might also have a picnic-style boxed lunch on some occasions. Many of the meals in hotels and restaurants will entail an assortment of meat (chicken and fish) and vegetable dishes being supplemented with rice and noodles, these will be shared amongst the group. Evening mealtimes will vary day to day due to the nature of the birding. We have several evenings of night-birding to fit in and on these occasions, we might have an evening meal later (or earlier) than usual. If you have to eat meals at certain times, such as for medication purposes, please bring a supply of snacks to do so.

## MONEY

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. We will pass through Makassar airport several times during the tour, and this will be one of the better opportunities to get cash out of ATMs as there is usually some choice of banks/ATMs to use. Other cities we pass through, such as Manado, Palu, and Luwuk could allow for money to be withdrawn but it is not uncommon to have difficulties in some of the more remote areas and small towns. Not all banks/ATMs accept all foreign cards and charges are likely to apply. We are unlikely to be able to draw cash while in Halmahera, though as we drive from the airport to the harbor in Ternate, we might be able to get some cash.

Most extra purchases/personal expenses are likely to require payment in cash, with the exception of hotels in major cities where cards are likely to be accepted.

## WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

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

1. A field guide to the region. We recommend the following book for this tour:
  - a. **Birds of the Indonesian Archipelago: Greater Sundas and Wallacea** – James

A Eaton *et al.* (2021), Lynx Edicions. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. We recommend the Flexibound version of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of this book, rather than the hardback or 1<sup>st</sup> edition versions that are also available.

2. 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.
3. Torch (flashlight) and/or headlamp is essential kit. Needed for owling (so you can see where you are walking) and when we set off on our birding in darkness (e.g. when we head up the Anaso Track in Lore Lindu National Park or when we hike to the (Wallace's) **Standardwing** lek. Headlamp is best to keep hands free for hiking pole/walking stick.
4. Insect repellent with a high DEET concentration.
5. Leech socks – can be useful, if it is unseasonably wet.
6. A small personal first aid kit. See the items recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [here](#). There are pharmacies in the cities we pass through, but we will only have limited access to these, so it is best to be prepared. When we are in remote Sulawesi or Halmahera there is very little (or nothing at all) available in terms of medical supplies.
7. Although footwear is a matter of personal preference, rubber boots can be extremely helpful, particularly in muddy/swampy conditions, they are also very good for keeping chiggers away from your skin, a very useful trait, particularly at Tangkoko National Park. A negative aspect to rubber boots is that they often lack suitable ankle support provided by walking/hiking boots (especially useful on the hike up the Anaso Track which is a rocky road) and can make your feet/legs rather sweaty in the heat to be expected. If you don't mind getting dirty (and potentially bitten by chiggers), in favor of better ankle support, go with walking boots and a good covering of DEET. It may be possible to purchase rubber boots on arrival in Makassar ahead of the tour starting should you wish, assuming they have your size (not a certainty here).
8. Quick-drying clothes are the best for this tour and a minimum of a fleece/jacket should be carried for time at the higher elevations such as at Lore Lindu National Park, where it can be cooler in the early mornings and evening/overnight.
9. Rain jacket (and small umbrella).
10. Swimwear if you want to make use of the swimming pools at the city hotels if time permits.
11. We find that a small hand towel or wash cloth can be handy for cleaning and drying items when in the rainforest.
12. A dry bag to keep valuable documents in such as passports, cell phones, wallets etc., as well as cameras if it rains.
13. Power bank – useful to keep items such as cell phones fully charged, but we should have electricity for most of the time on this tour. Can be useful when we have long drives or long travel days etc.





*Ivory-breasted Pitta is a target when we are birding Halmahera.*