

Birding Ecotours



VANUATU: PACIFIC ISLANDS EXTENSION

06–09 AUGUST 2027

12–15 AUGUST 2028



The stunning Melanesian Flycatcher (this is the male) can be seen while birding in Vanuatu.

Overview

This short, small-group tour visits Vanuatu, an often-overlooked destination for travelers and birders alike, yet the island nation is a tropical paradise of pristine beaches, untouched reefs, lush rainforest, and some rarely seen, stunning bird species. During this tour we spend time on two of the largest islands, first on the remote Espiritu Santo, then on Efate, where the capital city Port Vila is located, in our quest for bird species endemic to Vanuatu and Melanesia. Our Vanuatu tour is an extension to our **New Caledonia: Kagu and Other Endemics** tour, where we target one of the world's most iconic birds, the **Kagu**, amongst other exciting endemics.

First, we explore the remote and enchanting island of Espiritu Santo, an island steeped in history and unique culture, and where all of Vanuatu's endemic bird species have been recorded. During our time in this paradise, we visit rainforest, coastal wetlands, hill forest and abandoned WWII airfields in search of **Vanuatu Megapode**, **Vanuatu Kingfisher**, **Buff-bellied Monarch**, **Tanna Fruit Dove**, **Vanuatu White-eye**, **Vanuatu Streaked Fantail**, and **Cardinal Myzomela** among many other highlights. On Efate, the economic hub of Vanuatu, we will encounter a captivating blend of vibrant Ni-Vanuatu culture, and beautiful landscapes. Here we continue targeting the special birds of the region, which include **Melanesian Whistler**, **Red-bellied Fruit Dove**, **Satin Swiftlet**, and **Grey-eared Honeyeater**. For the fit and adventurous amongst you we can arrange a pre-tour extension to target some of the more difficult montane endemics, such as the ultra-rare **Mountain Starling** and **Santo Thicketbird**.



Grey-eared Honeyeater is a common bird on Efate.

Vanuatu promises an unforgettable experience, offering picturesque landscapes, interesting culture, exciting local cuisine, and rarely-seen endemic birds. Amid birding there will be

opportunity to relax and enjoy the beaches, reefs, and island charm. Our Vanuatu tour is an ideal add-on to our **New Caledonia: Kagu and Other Endemics** tour, where we target one of the worlds' most iconic birds, the **Kagu**, amongst other exciting endemics. For a more comprehensive exploration of the south-west Pacific, consider joining our **Fiji and Samoa: Pacific Birding Adventure** which follows the New Caledonia tour.

Detailed Itinerary (4 days/3 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Espiritu Santo

On arrival at Santo-Pekoa International Airport on Espiritu Santo you will be met by your guides and taken the short distance to our beautiful accommodation which we use as our base for our short, but exciting, tour. Here the group will have the chance to meet over dinner, discuss the tour, our targets, and enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

Overnight: Beachfront Resort



Southern Shrikebill is an active forager which can show well at times!

Day 2. Birding the Loru Protected Area

With an early start we depart for the Loru Protected Area, a site which holds all of Vanuatu's lowland endemic bird species. The site serves as an excellent example of the vital role local indigenous communities play in bird conservation. Throughout time, these communities have protected and preserved the area, leaving it wonderfully untouched and today it is one of the best

areas of lowland forest in Vanuatu. Here, within the coastal forests we will seek five of Vanuatu's endemic bird species – the gorgeous **Tanna Fruit Dove** and **Vanuatu Kingfisher**, energetic **Buff-bellied Monarch**, **Vanuatu White-eye**, and perhaps our most-wanted target is the rare and elusive **Vanuatu Megapode**, one of Vanuatu's most iconic birds. With a full day exploring the lowland forests of the Loru Protected Area we expect to encounter many species endemic to Melanesia, such as **Vanuatu Streaked Fantail**, **Melanesian Whistler**, **Spot-breasted Cuckoo-Dove**, **Southern Shrikebill**, **South Melanesian Cuckooshrike**, **Melanesian Flycatcher**, and stunning **Cardinal Myzomela**. We will keep an eye out for the recently split **Vanikoro Island Thrush** from the former Island Thrush complex which occurs across Vanuatu, though will need some luck to locate this new species as it is rare and elusive. We will arrive back to our accommodation in good time to enjoy the tranquility of our resort.

Overnight: [Beachfront Resort](#)



*The near endemic **Melanesian Flycatcher** (this is the female) adds a splash of color to the forests and looks very different to the male bird, shown on the itinerary front cover.*

Day 3. Birding across Espiritu Santo

Today our itinerary is flexible, depending on the success of the previous day. If we missed any of the lowland endemics at Loru we will likely return, as **Vanuatu Megapode** can be tricky and may require a repeat visit to get this star species. Alternatively, we may decide to venture into the heart of Espiritu Santo, driving along less well-used roads to access higher elevation. Here, we stand a chance of encountering some of Vanuatu's rarer and seldom-seen endemics, such as **Vanuatu Imperial Pigeon** and **White-bellied Honeyeater**. These are species of higher elevation forests, which are hard to access on Espiritu Santo, often requiring a multi-day hiking expedition, yet both species occur at lower altitudes. In addition, the ultra-rare **Rusty-winged Starling**, **Palm Lorikeet** and **Royal Parrotfinch** have been seen in these forests, and while we would be lucky to encounter

these species, we will certainly be on the lookout. Aside from these exciting species, we hope to encounter **Tanna Fruit Dove**, **Vanuatu Kingfisher**, **Metallic Pigeon**, **Pacific Imperial Pigeon**, **Polynesian Triller**, **Long-tailed Triller**, **Southern Shrikebill**, **Vanuatu Streaked Fantail**, and more.

In the afternoon we will visit Milai plantation, a wetland site in the south of the island. This is the best site on Espiritu Santo for waterbirds, and we will enjoy birding in a lovely setting, targeting **Hardhead**, **White-rumped Swiftlet**, **Uniform Swiftlet**, **Australasian Grebe**, **Little Pied Cormorant**, **White-faced Heron**, **Swamp Harrier**, **Pacific Kingfisher**, **Coconut Lorikeet**, **Fan-tailed Gerygone**, **Long-tailed Triller**, and **Pacific Swallow** amongst others. Between birding there will be time for relaxing by the beach, swimming, or snorkeling.

Overnight: Beachfront Resort



*We will look for **Long-tailed Triller** as we birdwatch across Vanuatu.*

Day 4. Birding Port Vila

This morning we will transfer to Port Vila on Efate where, on arrival, we will bird at an exceptionally beautiful site, with crystal clear water and lush coastal rainforest. We will continue targeting range-restricted species, with **Satin Swiftlet**, **Melanesian Whistler** and **Grey-eared Honeyeater**, which only occur on Vanuatu and neighboring New Caledonia, often more readily seen on Efate compared to Espiritu Santo. Another highlight will be the truly gorgeous and very vocal **Red-bellied Fruit Dove**. After this final birding session, this short yet exciting tour of remote Vanuatu will conclude in the afternoon when we journey back to Port Vila. Here we will prepare for our early morning flight from Efate to New Caledonia, and the start of our **New Caledonia: Kagu and Other Endemics** tour.

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, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling and other factors. Please note that the tour route is merely indicative because the local flight schedules are only released at quite a late stage, and this often changes the itinerary a little.

Tour Details

Duration:	4 days
Group size:	4–8
Dates:	06–09 August 2027 12–15 August 2028
Start:	Santo-Pekoa International Airport, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu
End:	Bauerfield International Airport, Efate, Vanuatu
Prices:	USD \$3,165 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2027) USD \$3,495 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2028)
Single supplement:	USD \$465 (2027) USD \$515 (2028)

Price includes:

Expert tour leader and local guides
Meals (from dinner on Day 1 until lunch on Day 4)
Accommodation based on two sharing (Day 1 to Day 3 as shown)
Domestic flight between Espiritu Santo and Efate
All entrance fees to national parks, nature reserves, etc.
All land-based transport and tolls while on tour
Airport and hotel transfers

Price excludes:

International flights to Santo-Pekoa International Airport, Espiritu Santo at the start of the tour
International flights from Bauerfield International Airport, Efate at the end of the tour
Accommodation between the Vanuatu and New Caledonian tours
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.
Alcoholic drinks
Personal insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))