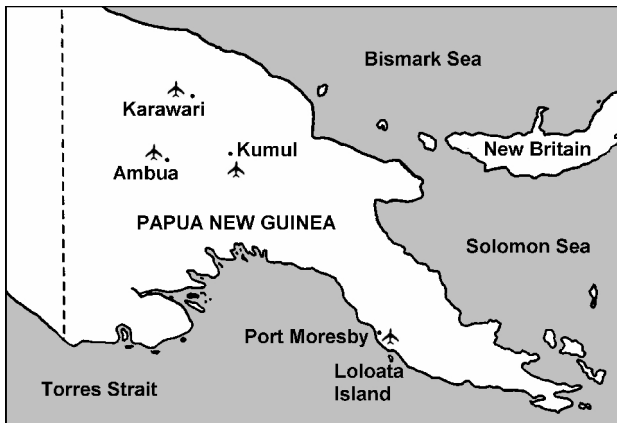


# PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*birds of paradise and rich culture from the comfort of some great ecolodges*



Returning from the unexplored forests and vast trackless swamps that clothe Papua New Guinea, Alfred Russel Wallace described the 'wonderful productions of nature' that he had discovered to the Zoological Society of London in 1862. He reported that the birds 'displayed that exquisite beauty and marvellous development of plumage, calculated to excite admiration and astonishment among the most civilised and intellectual races of man'.

Today we are bombarded with countless images of visually stunning birds. Among the shiny metallic pheasants, paintbox-coloured parrots and glistening hummingbirds, one family stands out: the birds of paradise. It was not surprising, therefore, that customers visiting our stand at the Birdfair voted Papua New Guinea as their number one dream destination.



*King of Saxony Bird of Paradise*

We have cherry picked some exciting places with superb birds close by, making this trip a marvellous holiday and not an extreme expedition. We take short flights (some by private charter) to remote, but very good quality lodges that even have birds of paradise visiting their gardens! We can also witness the tribal cultures that fascinated the likes of Wallace and Attenborough. We can visit the photogenic Anji people, and the famous Huli tribe and see how they used to make their amazing head-dresses. Some of our guides can tell you about the days when their fathers waged war and ate their enemies, but don't worry, that was in the 1950's. On our previous trips, we found the people charming, we have never seen a leech nor many mosquitoes, the accommodation was first class and *Homo sapiens* was not on any menu that we have looked at!

We will begin our trip in Port Moresby where we will look for the Raggiana Bird of Paradise in Varirata National Park. From here, we will fly to Mount Hagen, home of the Sicklebills and Superb Bird of Paradise. Our private plane will take us to a beautiful lodge at Karawari in the Sepik River Region, where we will explore the area from the comfort of our own boat. The next hop is to Ambua in the Southern Highlands, before a final night's rest at Port Moresby.

## ITINERARY

### PORT MORESBY

Our flight arrives at the capital of Papua New Guinea. We have two nights to recharge our batteries, but there are great things to see. A visit to the university campus should yield the cryptic Papuan Frogmouth, while a wide variety of Australian wetland species include Comb-crested Jacana, Radjah Shelduck, Dusky Moorhen, Spotted Whistling Ducks, Australian Ibis, Masked Lapwing and Australasian Grebe. A day at Varirata National Park gives us the chance to see displaying Raggiana Bird of Paradise, perhaps the most iconic bird of their family. The Barred Owlet Nightjar roosts in

hollow branches, Papuan Needletails fly overhead and a Paradise Kingfisher may dart by. The Hooded Pitohui can also be found here. The recent discovery that it has evolved poisonous skin and feathers that are able to kill creatures the size of a mouse underlines just how otherworldly this place is.

### MOUNT HAGEN, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

A short flight takes us to Mount Hagen, capital of the Central Highlands. Here we spend three nights at Kumul Lodge. The gardens and surrounding forest are well known for attracting birds of paradise like the amazing Blue Bird of Paradise and the Superb Bird of Paradise. The chest of the latter opens to show a dazzling electric blue shield that draws in the sun like

a magnet. The less gaudy Brown and Black Sicklebills are of the same family, their long bills and extravagant tails making up for their lack of colour. Papuan Flowerpeckers, together with Ornate and Rufous-sided Honey-eaters, gather nectar from flowering shrubs. Papuan Parrotfinch may drop in, and we could also see the delightful White-shouldered Fairy-wren.

One can never tire of watching the bird feeders at Kumul, as birds come and go all day. Now and again a possum may grab fruit intended for the tiger-parrots and berrypeckers. You are able to stroll around the grounds to look at the various orchids here and, if you can tear yourself away, we have arranged a visit to a village of the Anji tribe. Here you can see the intricate way they decorate themselves and perform their sing-sing, while taking some photographs if you wish.

### KARAWARI, SEPIK RIVER REGION

On day seven, we will take a private plane to the Sepik River. We will explore the area by comfortable boat. Each bend of the river reveals something new. Yellow-billed, Sacred and Azure Kingfishers sit by the banks while the larger Rufous-bellied Kookaburra watches from higher in the trees. We can expect other waterbirds such as Great-billed Heron, Little Pied Cormorant and Oriental Darter, as well as raptors like Whistling Kite and White-bellied Sea-eagle. Perhaps a Shining Flycatcher, Island Leaf Warbler, Rusty Pitohui, Brown Oriole or Singing Starling will put in an appearance too.

In the evening, starlings, mynahs, fruit doves and parrots fly to roost. The massive blue-black Palm Cockatoos dwarf the Papuan and Rainbow Lorikeets, Eclectus Parrots and Dusky Lorys. If you thought pigeons were boring then you have never seen a Victoria Crowned Pigeon. These big powder-blue birds patrol the forest floor like turkeys. Above them perch yet more birds of paradise. The Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise shuffles up and down a vertical twig, waving its 12 feather 'wires' in the face of any female that joins him. The elusive King Bird of Paradise waves two green-blobbed spatule-shaped feathers over its red and gold head while climbing up a vine and wagging its undertail. After three nights here, our pilot returns to take us on another brief hop over the mountains to the Tari Gap.

### AMBUA, SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Ambua Lodge nestles in a biodiversity hot spot most easily accessed at Tari Gap. The area is synonymous with birds of paradise. The beautiful gardens here hold many different species that include Short-tailed Paradigalla, Lawe's Parotia, and Loria's and Crested Satinbirds. When trees are fruiting, they are visited by figbirds, butcherbirds, cuckoo-shrikes, gerygones and berrypeckers. The well-kept flowerbeds encourage Belford's and Yellow-browed Melidectes to linger.

A trip over Tari Gap allows us to search for shyer forest birds like Garnet Robin, Smokey Honeyeater, Red-collared Myzomela and Papuan Scrubwren. Continuing higher, the forest opens to reveal an alpine-like habitat. There are fewer birds here, but scenically it is very impressive. Patches of scrub house the bowers of Macgregor's Bowerbirds. Blue Bird of Paradise, Princess Stephanie's Astrapia or the King-of-Saxony could be a contender for bird of the trip. The latter has amazing eyebrow attachments so long that they frequently get them tangled on tree branches. The Ribbon-tailed Astrapia has the longest tail for its size, of any bird.

We will not ignore the cultural heritage of this incredibly diverse country. The Huli tribe own the land here and have a fascinating culture. It takes two years for a wigman to grow and decorate an extravagant wig. With their necks protected by the skull of a hornbill and a purse made from a cassowary thighbone, the men paint their faces red and yellow before crowning themselves with the most beautiful plumes. Their

dances or sing-sings are a form of respectful greeting and not a war dance, as films would have you believe.

### PORT MORESBY

After our time in the swamps and forests, we return to Port Moresby to relax. If flight times allow we can revisit the scrubland in the university grounds to catch up with some of the birds we have missed, perhaps Friendly Fantail, Willie Wagtail, New Guinea White-eye or Varied Triller. The next day we will fly back to the UK.

### CLIMATE AND PACE

It will be hot and humid at lower elevations. In the highlands it is cool but pleasant, with a chance of showers at any time. Most days we will make an early start but have a break in the early afternoon, when the temperature is at its highest and the birds are rather quiet. The birding sites are normally close to the lodges, so travelling is kept to a minimum. Basic fitness is all that is required and the pace will be sensible. Much of the birding will be on good trails (with some uphill) and by boat. There are, however, some uneven, muddy paths and maybe fallen logs which have to be stepped over.

### ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

Full-board accommodation is provided, with two nights at the Stanley Hotel, Port Moresby, three nights at Kumul Lodge, Mount Hagen, three nights at Karawari Lodge, Sepik River, four nights at Ambua Lodge, Southern Highlands and one night back at the Stanley Hotel, Port Moresby. All offer good quality accommodation with en suite facilities, except Kumul, which is rustic and, being in the highlands it can be damp and cold at night. There are occasional power cuts and this can affect the provision of hot water there.

### PRICE INCLUDES .....

All birdwatching excursions with Bird Holidays leader and expert local guides, full-board accommodation (starting with lunch on 7<sup>th</sup>, ending with breakfast on 20<sup>th</sup>), soft drinks at meal times, bottled water throughout, local transport by mini-bus, boat trips, reserve entrance fees, cultural visits as mentioned above, all internal flights and international flights.

### WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

Travel insurance. Personal items, alcoholic drinks, laundry.

### INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Flights from London Heathrow to Port Moresby (via Dubai and Singapore), using the scheduled services of Emirates Airlines and Air Niugini. Outbound flight departs mid-morning, return arrives back mid-afternoon. **It is also possible to fly from Manchester and other UK airports. Please contact us for details.**

<b>16 nights</b> including three overnight flights:	<b>5<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> July 2018</b>
<b>Principal leader:</b>	<b>Phil Palmer</b>
<b>Local guides:</b>	<b>provided by each lodge</b>
<b>Maximum group size:</b>	<b>10 clients with one leader and local guides</b>
<b>Cost with discount (if you book before 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018):</b>	<b>£9680 per person sharing (£1480 single supplement)</b>
<b>Full Cost:</b>	<b>£9820 per person sharing</b>
<b>Deposit:</b>	<b>£1500 per person</b>