

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



September 2-16, 2021
and
September 16-30, 2021

Tentative price \$8999*

***Price tentative until Air Niugini confirms scheduling for 2021**

***Does not include international or internal airfare**

Single Supplement: \$1851

One of the last true frontiers of travel, Papua New Guinea (PNG) boasts an unparalleled array of ecological beauty. From impenetrable ranges with snow-capped peaks, to the largest intact rainforest outside the Amazon, to 600 islands and atolls ringed with coral, this little-visited Melanesian nation is a land of million journeys. PNG's geographical wealth is rivaled only by its anthropological diversity, with more than 850 distinctive cultures that, among them, speak 45 percent of the world's living languages.

The island of New Guinea has one the richest and most varied avifauna in the world. The 708 bird species identified so far for the islands include 578 land and freshwater species, 40 sea birds and 90 migrants from countries to the North and South. Of the 43 known species of Bird of Paradise on our planet, 38 of these are found in Papua New Guinea. The extent of the millinery trade of the last century significantly affected the populations of these beautiful birds. As a result, all species of Bird of Paradise in Papua New Guinea are now protected, and it is illegal to take their plumes out of the country. The major threat to their existence now is commercial logging and the clearance of their habitats and rainforests for gardens as the country's population grows.

Among the many families of birds existing in PNG are cassowaries, birds of prey, megapods, pigeons and doves, cuckoos and coucals, owls and frogmouths, lorries and lorikeets, parrots, cockatoos, kingfishers, hornbills, cuckoo-shrikes, trillers, shrikes, thrushes, logrunners, babblers, warblers, fairy-wrens, fantails, monarchs and robins, whistlers and pitohuis, honeyeaters, finches, starlings, mynahs, orioles, drongos, wood swallows, butcherbirds, bowerbirds, and Birds of Paradise.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1

You will need to depart the US a 2 – 3 days early in order to arrive in Port Moresby today, where you will be met by a Trans Niugini Tours (TNT) representative and transferred to a hotel in the city. For those who arrive early enough, we will meet for dinner at the hotel at 7:00 PM

Airways Hotel, Port Moresby (Dinner only)

Day 2

Today we will enjoy a full day of birding in Variarata National Park, located in the foothills above Port Moresby. The dry Eucalypt forests on the access road to the national park are frequented by Coconut Lorikeet, Red-cheeked Parrot, and Black-capped Lory, all noisy birds that will announce their presence to us. Birds we can hope to find here include White-shouldered Fairy-Wren, Black Sunbird, White-throated Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, White-bellied Whistler, and Hooded Butcherbird, to name but a few. As we walk along the well-marked trails of the park, we'll keep our eyes open for some of the 24 species of kingfishers known to occur in Papua New Guinea, which includes several paradise kingfishers, so named because of their long trailing tails. Of particular interest here is the chance to see Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher, a PNG endemic, as well as Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, considered the most

attractive of the "giant kingfishers". Other possibilities include Yellow-billed, Azure, Forest, Papuan Dwarf, and Sacred Kingfishers. Another group of birds well-represented in Variarata are the Fruit-Doves, including Wompoo, Superb, Orange-bellied, Pink-spotted, and Beautiful. Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, Metallic Pigeon, and Amoyna Cuckoo-Dove are other members of the Columbididae family we might run into, as well as a myriad of species from other families: White-faced Robin, Black Cicadabird, Barred Cuckooshrike, Sooty Thicket Fantail, Chestnut-bellied Fantail,



Rufous-bellied Kookaburra

Green-backed Honeyeater, Rusty Mouse-Warbler, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Gray Whistler, Rusty and Hooded Pitohuis, Growling Riflebird, Black Berrypecker, Dwarf Longbill and Frilled, Black-faced and Spot-winged Monarchs. Among the more challenging possibilities today are Pheasant Pigeon, Black-billed Brushturkey, Painted Quail-Thrush, Papuan Scrub Robin, and Chestnut-backed Jewel-Babbler. All of these secretive ground dwellers are just a matter of luck, but we'll hope to have enough good fortune to also find a couple of the most difficult birds to spot, such as Dwarf Cassowary and Forest Bittern. The highlight of our first day of birding in Papua New Guinea will be a visit to a display site for Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise.

Airways Hotel, Port Moresby (BLD)

Day 3

This morning we will do a bit of birding before breakfast and then we will take a flight from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen. We will be met by a TNT representative and transferred to Mount Hagen City, which is the heart of the Papua New Guinea Highlands, supplying a number of important industries such as tea, coffee, and mining. It is a city where stone meets steel, where tradition and history are juxtaposed against modern ways. We will take a journey through the traditions and customs of the Melpa People, first encountered by the Leahy brothers in the mid-1930s when they were prospecting for gold. The Melpa are said by anthropologists to be “predisposed to capitalism” because of their complex traditional society in which “big men” earn status by accruing wealth and then giving it all away in ceremonial exchanges. We will arrive at Kumul Lodge in time for dinner.

Kumul Lodge is one of the best-known landowner eco-tourism lodges in Papua New Guinea. Made out of local materials, entirely owned and managed by local people and employing local guides, you can be sure that your money is helping to support the people of the immediate area. Our presence here helps to preserve the surrounding forest as a home for some of the most beautiful and unusual birds in the world. The owners are working to raise local environmental awareness and, in time, hope that their ongoing efforts will lead to the area being declared a National Park.

Kumul Lodge (BLD)

Day 4

We will enjoy a full day of birding at Kumul Lodge. Kumul is an excellent destination for montane New Guinea birding and is the only bird lodge in New Guinea where Birds of Paradise are among the regulars at the lodge feeders, offering fantastic photo opportunities. Other regulars at the feeders include Brehm's Tiger Parrot, Smoky Honeyeater, Belford's Melidectes and Island Thrush. Chestnut Forest Rail is occasionally seen beneath the feeder while **Crested** Berrypecker and White-winged Robin are often seen nearby. The grounds also offer trails through excellent moss forest where you can see Crested Satinbird, Chestnut Forest Rail, Lesser Melampitta and maybe New Guinea Woodcock, if you are lucky.

Kumul Lodge (BLD)

Day 5

We will enjoy a morning at the feeders at Kumul Lodge before being transferred to our next lodge, Rondon Ridge. Rondon Ridge lies 7100 feet above sea level, on the outer fringes of the Kubor Range. Boasting panoramic views of the Wahgi Valley below, Rondon Ridge is the pinnacle of luxury in a remote and rural setting. It is a spectacular introduction to the lodges owned and operated by Trans Nugini Tours and a welcome stepping-stone to civilization before departure from Mount Hagen. The area surrounding Rondon Ridge Lodge is pristine rain forest and home to numerous plant and animal species. The lodge has hours of walking trails providing ample opportunity to explore the unique ecology of this area. Over 180 species of birds have been recorded in the rainforest around Rondon Ridge, including TWELVE species of Bird of Paradise. This afternoon, we will enjoy a nature and birding walk accompanied by an experienced and knowledgeable nature guide. A comprehensive bird list is available for Rondon Ridge at this website:

<http://www.pngtours.com/rondonridgebird.html>

Rondon Ridge Lodge (BLD)



Day 6

We will leave before sunrise to hike a fairly difficult trail, going up approximately 1000 feet in elevation to a site where multiple Birds-of-Paradise display at dawn. We'll take our time birding at the top, where we'll eat a packed breakfast among the birds. We'll bird our way back down to the lodge after lunch, which will be brought to us at our location at the proper time. Participants who think this trail sounds too difficult will have the opportunity to bird on less strenuous trails with a guide.

Rondon Ridge Lodge (BLD)

Day 7

We will transfer to Kagamuga Airport for our first charter flight of the trip, which will take us to Karawari Lodge. Upon arrival at the Karawari airstrip, we will be met and transferred by river boat to the lodge, which stands majestically on a lone ridge, 300 meters above the banks of the Karawari River and overlooking an endless expanse of dense tropical lowland rain forest.



One of the most remote and unspoiled destinations in Papua New Guinea, the lodge's private airstrip and the Karawari River are the only way in or out. Stilted villages line the edges of flooded waterways, and dug-out canoes are the primary mode of transport. There are no roads and no shops. The local people, the Sepik, live completely off the land and river, weaving baskets for catching fish, and gathering, preparing and cooking their staple food from the Sago Palm.

This tropical lowland rainforest is one of earth's most complex of habitats, housing an immense variety of flora and fauna - a staggering 229 different bird species have been recorded at Karawari. We will take a guided birding tour in the vicinity of Karawari Lodge in the afternoon. Near the lodge we should have the opportunity to spot Palm Cockatoos, along with an assortment of Lories and Parrots, to name but a few. You can find a complete bird list for Karawari Lodge at this website:

<http://www.pngtours.com/karawaribird.html>

Karawari Lodge (BLD)

Day 8

We will enjoy a full day of birding by boat along the Karawari River. As we cruise slowly along this slow-moving river, we'll get a glimpse into the lives of the Sepik people while searching the trees and skies for birds. We will occasionally disembark to hike short distances in search of target species like the elusive 12-Wire Bird-of-Paradise and the King Bird-of-Paradise. Karawari is an excellent base to find lowland rain forest birds and freshwater birds of Papua New Guinea, and it is here that we have our best chance to spot Blyth's Hornbill, the only one of its family found in Papua New Guinea. Forest-dwelling birds include the Cassowaries, Brush-Turkeys, and Scrub Fowls, along with Rails, Doves and Pigeons, Lories and Lorikeets, Parrots and Cockatoos, Bee-eaters, Hornbills, Flycatchers, Honeyeaters, Manikins, Mynas, and Bowerbirds.

Karawari Lodge (BLD)

Day 9

We'll have just a bit of morning birding near the lodge before our transfer from Karawari Lodge by boat to Karawari airstrip for charter flight to Lake Murray Lodge. Be sure to have your camera ready for some shots from the plane as we fly over this magnificent lake.

Nestled among the trees on an island spit, Lake Murray lodge overlooks beautiful Lake Murray. Here in the remote reaches of Papua New Guinea, you truly feel that you are on the edge of the earth. The almost unbroken quiet of the lake is barely disturbed by the gentle sounds of dugout canoes seamlessly gliding through the water. Despite some Western influences, the tribes in this remote area still maintain many of their ancient and traditional customs and ways of life.



At about 2000 square kilometers in the wet season, Lake Murray is the largest lake in Papua New Guinea. Island communities of stilted houses dot the water landscape of the lake. The tribes that inhabit the small, remote villages live their life on the water. Dugout canoes are their primary mode of transportation and the abundant stock of freshwater fish provide their staple food source.



We will enjoy a leisurely afternoon of birding near our cabins at Lake Murray Lodge after lunch.

Lake Murray Lodge (BLD)

Day 10

Full day of birding at Lake Murray Lodge and environs. Today's birding will be via boat and will include a picnic lunch. We should be able to find 12-wired Bird of Paradise and Raggiana Bird of Paradise this morning, along with an assortment of kingfishers and other birds.

You can find a comprehensive bird list for Lake Murray Lodge at this website:

<http://www.pngtours.com/lakemurraybird.html>

Lake Murray Lodge (BLD)

Day 11

Full day of birding at Lake Murray Lodge and environs.

Lake Murray Lodge (BLD)

Day 12

Once again, we'll have a bit of early morning birding before our transfer to Lake Murray Lodge airstrip for our charter flight to Tari. When we land, we will be transferred from the airport to Ambua Lodge, just in time for lunch. We will spend some time birding around the lodge after a midday rest.

Ambua Lodge (BLD)

Day 13

Full day of birding at Ambua Lodge. A favored destination among birders, Ambua's rain forests have been the star of many a wildlife documentary. An incredible 217 species have been recorded here and Ambua is home to 13 different species of Bird of Paradise. Ambua employs knowledgeable local birding guides and caters for all interest levels, from early morning birding excursions for guests on more culturally orientated tours, keen to catch a glimpse of these spectacular birds, to fully specialized birding tours tailored to the seasoned enthusiast.

Ambua is surrounded by pristine, mid-montane jungle, a mass of interlocking treetops, shades of green spattered with occasional splashes of color from high altitude orchids and rhododendrons. Well-maintained nature trails venture out into this wilderness, crossing traditional vine bridges, tracing clear mountain streams to secluded waterfalls.

Guests are accommodated in thirty round houses, set among landscaped gardens and built almost exclusively from natural materials. Each unit features picture windows to soak in a 180-degree view and en-suite bathrooms. Guests can also be accommodated in our two-story block of 18 modern hotel rooms. Electric blankets and continental quilts for the cool highland evenings are provided. Ambua has 24-hour, eco-friendly electricity, provided by its own hydroelectric power plant that generates clean, natural energy from a nearby mountain stream. The main lodge building houses the bar, dining and lounge areas and a cozy central fireplace.

Surrounded by forests of Southern Beech and New Guinea Oak, as well as grasslands, this area is a naturalist's dream. Here in these remote and dense forests, nomadic people lived for short periods of time, collecting karuka (pandanus) nuts, hunting marsupials, and collecting the prized feathers of the Birds of Paradise.

Ambua Lodge (BLD)

Day 14

We will enjoy a second full day of birding at Ambua Lodge. Tari is home to one of the most immediately recognizable cultures in Papua New Guinea - the "[Huli Wigmen](#)". A proud, flamboyant tribe known for their ornate ceremonial "wigs" with dances and songs fashioned on that of the mating rituals of the Birds of Paradise - an encounter with the Huli's is bound to be memorable. Life for the majority of villagers around Tari remained mostly unchanged until the turn of this century. Discoveries of natural gas and mineral reserves over the last few years have brought about a sudden and unexpected increase in wealth and led to a hive of economic and commercial activity, thrusting Tari into the 21st century in a matter of a few short years. Social, tribal and ancestral beliefs and dynamics, once embedded so deeply, are being rapidly forgotten and replaced by more "rewarding" and modern pursuits. Tari today, however, is one of the few remaining areas where men and women still adhere to many of their traditional beliefs and where a man's wealth and importance is still measured by his amassing of pigs, wives and land. If Air Niugini schedules require that we spend an extra night at Ambua (TBA), we can arrange a visit to a Hui village for our last day. Alternatively, if some participants want to skip a day of birding in order to make this cultural stop, that can be arranged.



Ambua Lodge (BLD)

Day 15

We will have a short time to do a bit of birding near the lodge before we leave to board an Air Niugini flight back to Port Moresby, where we will connect with our international flights to begin the journey home.

Note: Air Niugini has not released its schedule for Tari-Port Moresby flights for 2021, so we may need to take a charter flight to Mount Hagen and then proceed to Port Moresby from there. Depending on flight availability, we might need to spend one more night in PNG, which is the reason for the tentative pricing for this tour. All details were scheduled to be confirmed by April of 2020, but the pandemic has prevented Air Niugini from establishing a schedule for 2021.

Note: Tour 2 will follow a slightly different schedule, going to Lake Murray before Karawari. Both tours have the same number of nights at each lodge, just not in the same order.

Air Niugini Internal flights (not included in tour price):

Port Moresby to Mount Hagen, September 3 (Tour 1) or 18 (Tour 2)

Tari to Port Moresby, September 16 (Tour 1) or 30 (Tour 2) – Please note that this flight takes the place of the Tari-Mt. Hagen flight listed in the schedule below *IF* Air Niugini puts this flight back on their schedule.

Cheepers! will arrange these flights for the group and add the cost to the final invoice. We should be able to get approximate airfare prices shortly after things return to normal, and we will be able to book the flights and confirm the price 11 months prior to travel dates.

Trans Niugini Tours Charter flights (not included in tour price):

TOUR 1:

Sept 8: Mt Hagen to Karawari - US\$ 418.00 per person

Sept. 10: Karawari to Lake Murray - \$523.00 per person

Sept. 13: Lake Murray to Tari - \$523.00 per person

Sept. 16: Tari to Mt. Hagen - \$418.00 per person (This flight will be included **ONLY** if the Air Niugini flight from Tari directly to Port Moresby is not available. If this is necessary, we would then book our Port Moresby-Mt. Hagen tickets for round-trip travel.)

TOUR 2:

Sept. 22: Mount Hagen to Lake Murray - \$523 per person

Sept. 25: Lake Murray to Karawari - \$523 per person

Sept. 27: Karawari to Tari - \$418 per person

Sept. 30: Tari to Mt. Hagen - \$418.00 per person (This flight will be included **ONLY** if the Air Niugini flight from Tari directly to Port Moresby is not available. If this is necessary, we would then book our Port Moresby-Mt. Hagen tickets for round-trip travel.)

PRICING DETAILS

Price includes:

- ~ Lodging
- ~ All meals as indicated (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
- ~ All land and river transportation within Papua New Guinea
- ~ Entrance fees
- ~ Local bilingual birding guides
- ~ Services of two *Cheepers!* tour leaders (Jim & Cindy Beckman)
- ~ Pre-trip gift package including customized checklist
- ~ Post-trip electronic group checklist and digital photo collection

Price does NOT include:

- ~ International airfare to Port Moresby
- ~ Internal airfare Port Moresby – Mount Hagan and Tari – Port Moresby
- ~ Charter flights within Papua New Guinea
- ~ Alcoholic drinks
- ~ Travel insurance
- ~ Tips for guides and staff (All tips are optional and at your discretion.)
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, etc.

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Deposit of \$1350 with registration. Balance is due on or before May 3, 2021 (Tour 1) or May 16, 2021 (Tour 2).

Checks should be made payable to **Cheepers! Birding on a Budget** and mailed with the registration form to:

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget

Post Office Box 385

Spring Valley, OH 45370

Cancellation policy:

Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.

Trip insurance is highly recommended.

You can compare insurance coverage and prices at the following websites:

www.quotewright.com

www.insuremytrip.com

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity.