Full Detailed Itinerary - New Guinea: Mysterious West Papua

Day 1: Arrival in Sentani (Indonesia)

After arrival in Sentani, you'll be transferred to a hotel in the city. There is no birding planned for this day.

Days 2-3: Nimbokrang

After driving from Sentani to Nimbokrang on the morning of day 2, we shall spend the rest of day 2, and all of day 3 there. This lowland site may be hot and sweaty, but it is loaded with special birds – a major theme on this tour! King Bird-of-paradise, Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise, Hook-billed, Shovel-billed and Blue-and-black Kingfishers, Vulturine Parrot, and Blue Jewel-Babbler, are just some of the birds on offer, though all of these species require a combination of luck and effort. Other notable species include Salvadori's Fig-Parrot, Hooded Monarch, and Beautiful, Superb, and Wompoo Fruit-Doves.

Day 4: Nimbokrang to Sentani

After a final morning in Nimbokrang, we shall return to Sentani in the afternoon for another night.

Days 5-8: The Snow Mountains

On the morning of day 5, we will take a flight to Wamena, where we will be based in a hotel for four nights, from where we will explore the Snow Mountains. A variety of habitats will be covered, including grasslands and highland forests close to the treeline. This area is home to a number of restricted range species, most notably, Orange-cheeked Honeyeater, Black-breasted Munia, Snow Mountain Quail, and MacGregor's Honeyeater, long classified as a bird-of-paradise, but now recognized as the most magnificent of the sprawling honeyeater clan; a regal resident of Papua's most lofty heights. Birding between Wamena and Lake Habemma will give us a wide range of species to search for, including Crested Berrypecker, Splendid Astrapia, Greater and Lesser Ground-Robin, Subalpine Robin, Alpine Pipit, Orange-billed Lorikeet, and Short-bearded and Belford's Melidictes. The New Guinea Woodcock and rare Archbold's Nightjar will be looked for at dusk. Other birds we'll be on the lookout for include members of island endemic families, like the black-and-orange Crested Satinbird, the funky Wattled Ploughbill, and the nuthatch-like Blue-capped Ifrita. However, note that we won't be descending the increasingly treacherous Ibele Trail, limiting our access to middle elevations, and reducing our chances for some of these species. Nights will be spent in a comfortable hotel in Wamena. *Please note that our exact program in the Snow Mountains will depend on the accessibility of certain sites and will be at the discretion of the guide leading the tour. For years now the Indonesian government has had a blockade that impacts access to Lake Habemma. Some years its open, some years not, some days its open, some days not. If it's closed we have to visit other sites near Wamema, but it means we cannot get to the highest reaches of the mountains and it certainly costs some target birds. There is nothing we can do about this other than make you aware, this impacts Tropical Birding and all other operators in this part of the world. It makes no difference who you do the tour with, every operator has to deal with this potential significant disruption.

Day 9: Wamena to Sentanti

After our final time birding in the Snow Mountains, we will return to Sentani via a flight from Wamena, for another single night stay.

Day 10: Sentani to the Arfak Mountains

After a flight to Manokwari, and a jeep drive, we will arrive at what is arguably the premier birding site on this side of New Guinea, the Arfak Mountains, situated on the northeast of the Bird's Head (Vogelkop) Peninsula. This part of the island has a rich set of endemics all its own, plus a huge variety of widespread forest species. Four nights will be spent at a guesthouse at an elevation of 5250ft/1600m, and we will bird a range of elevations above and below here.

Days 11-13: The Arfak Mountains

With so much to see here, we will spend three full days birding the various forests, gardens and other secondary habitats that flank the mountains, and hold many of the tour's standout birds. We will visit the display grounds of Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise, Western Parotia, and the bower of the Vogelkop Bowerbird, one of the great architects of the bird world, with an extraordinarily large and decorative bower that far outshines the dour bird itself! While these may arguably be the most famous targets in the mountains, the list of other birds is both extensive and tantalizing, and includes the likes of Vogelkop Lophorina, Long-tailed Paradigalla, and Spotted Jewel-Babbler. If we are extremely lucky we might catch up with Masked Bowerbird, Vulturine Parrot, or the New Guinea Harpy Eagle. Although some of these require long walks on tricky trails. Other possibilities include the elusive Spotted Jewel-Babbler, Papuan Treecreeper, Mottled Berryhunter (a monotypic endemic family), Blue-collared Parrot, Blue-grey and Green-backed Robins, Perplexing Scrubwren, Vogelkop and Ornate Melidectes, and if we are extremely lucky, Wattled Brush-Turkey. The nights will be spent at a community guesthouse. Sometimes owlet-nightjars can be found by day, but failing that we may venture out at night in search of Feline Owlet-Nightar, Papuan Frogmouth, and Papuan Boobook.

Day 14: The Arfaks to Manokwari

After another full day in the Arfaks chasing the last of the best birds of the mountains we return to Manokwari where we overnight in a comfortable city hotel.

Day 15: Manokwari to Sorong

After taking a flight to Sorong, we can bird some forest patches close to there, which a good selection of the island's huge range of lowland forest birds. Just a few of many species that we might encounter include Blyth's Hornbill, Eclectus Parrot, Emperor Fairywren, Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, and Papuan Drongo. A single night will be spent in Sorong.

Day 16: Sorong to Waigeo Island

We will take a fast and comfortable ferry to Waigeo island, where we'll stay for the next three nights. This island located in the Raja Ampat archipelago, arguably boasts the most-wanted birds on the tour. Display sites of both Red Bird-of-paradise and the awe-inspiring Wilson's Bird-of-paradise will be visited during our days on the island. To make it even better, these sites are easy to reach after short 10-minute walks, in contrast to the way it was as little as five years ago when a 2:30 a.m. wake-up was required to reach an uphill display site at dawn!

Days 17-18: Waigeo Island

In addition to the aforementioned 'BoP's, the lowlands of this island offer a huge list of birds, including the localized Raja Ampat Pitohui, the incredible Western Crowned Pigeon, Great-billed and Moluccan King-Parrots, Claret-breasted, Orange-bellied and Dwarf Fruit-Doves, Palm Cockatoo, Coconut Lorikeet, Yellow-faced Myna, Papuan Pitta, elusive White-eared Catbird, Brown-headed Crow, New Guinea Friarbird, and Golden Monarch. At night, we can go in search of Marbled Frogmouth. The Waigeo Cuscus – a bizarre endemic mammal is also occasionally seen here.

Day 19: Waigeo Island to Sorong/DEPARTURES

In the afternoon we shall return to Sorong via ferry in order to arrive in time for international departures on this evening.

Tour Extension 1

Day 1: Arrival in Biak

After morning arrival in Biak, we shall begin our birding on the island this afternoon. Two nights will be spent on Biak.

Day 2: Biak

This island is home to palm-lined sandy beaches, although our attention will be focused on the patches of forest, where the island specialties can be found. Biak is home to the stunning Biak Paradise-Kingfisher, and our priority will be to seek out this beauty. There are other specialties of the archipelago, such as Biak Coucal, Geelvink Pygmy-Parrot, Biak Gerygone and the gorgeous Biak Monarch. Other species that we may see here include Spice Imperial-Pigeon, and the beautiful local subspecies of Golden Monarch. In the evening, we will be on the lookout for flights of parrots, including Black-capped and Black-winged Lories. After dark, we could find Large-tailed Nightjar or Papuan Frogmouth.

Day 3: Biak to Sentani

On this day a flight will be taken from Biak to Sentani, in order to arrive on the first day of the main tour.