

Birding tour to Indonesia: the birds-of-paradise of Papua

21 days | 07 Aug 2027 - 27 Aug 2027

 Nature

 Nature group tours

West-Papua is the home range of one of the most appealing bird families in the world, the birds-of-paradise! At this rarely visited place you will have the opportunity to see about 20 species of birds-of-paradise in an incredible setting. For people who love adventure, love birds and have always wanted to stand among dancing birds-of-paradise, this is the dream destination. Of all travel organizations in the Benelux, STARLING has the largest "field experience" in West-Papua. We have observed almost all possible species that you can see here more than once.

Birding tour for the more seasoned adventurers

Our West-Papua birding tour focuses on birds-of-paradise and the other exclusive species and families that roam the forests on the island. As one of the largest islands in the world, through a combination of isolation as well as a varied landscape, an extremely rich ecological diversity evolved over the course of history. Some of the most beautiful bird species on our planet call these forests their home here. Since the island is still years away from civilization, West-Papua is also one of the least visited destinations in the world. Quite exciting to travel there, so to speak!

On the schedule: birds-of-paradise, wildlife and so much more

Our adventure starts at Nimbokrang, where we can see a nice range of lowland birds-of-paradise and other species. Think of local specialties such as pale-billed sicklebill, twelve-wired and lesser bird-of-paradise or the rarely seen blue-black kingfisher. Maybe we come across a roaming northern cassowary, a shovel-billed kingfisher, a magnificent riflebird or the Victoria crowned pigeon? Moreover, it is the place for 2 of the most beautiful bird species on our planet: the king bird-of-paradise and the blue jewel-babbler.

Then we travel west to the Vogelkop peninsula, more specifically to the Arfak Mountains. We fly to the small town of Manokwari, from where we travel with 4x4 pick-ups to the village of Sioubri. We visit the dance grounds of the western parotia and magnificent bird-of-paradise and have the chance to score 5 extra birds-of-paradise: Arfak astrapia, long-tailed paradigalla (rediscovered in 1989!), Vogelkop superb bird-of-paradise, buff-tailed and black sicklebill. Further on we see the impressive artworks of the Vogelkop bowerbird and the masked bowerbird.

For the past two years, we have been one of the only travel organizations in the world to successfully do a trip to the gray-banded manakin. A bird species of which only one location on the Vogelkop peninsula is known. For this one, you sure gotta visit the right spots!

Along the way we discover more beauties: a few species of owlet-nightjars (strange crossings between owls and nightjars), Papuan eagle (a species from the Harpy eagle family), the endemic white striped forest-rail and much, much more.

Finally we go to Sorong. There we take a boat to the Raja Ampat Islands, where we visit the cliffs of the Wilson's bird-of-paradise, one of the most bizarre and rare birds of the trip. We also visit the red bird-of-paradise dancing site and we also have a good chance of seeing western crowned-pigeon. A worthy end to the journey!

What makes this birding tour to Papua so special?

- You enjoy dancing birds-of-paradise in one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet.
- You travel in the wake of our top team and our own STARLING guide.
- The order of our itinerary was very consciously chosen to experience West-Papua at its best.

Get to know your tour guide



Jan will take you on this tour along the least travelled paths of Irian Jaya, the Indonesian part of Papua. His dedication and knowledge come in very handy when searching for hard-to-find species. In every area we visit we are also accompanied by a local guide. With the up-to-date knowledge of these people, you can count on even more highlights than are already on the itinerary. This will be a trip to remember, we promise!

Is this birding tour to Papua something for you?

- You are a true bird enthusiast (m/f) and you are willing to do a lot to see new species.
- The excursions and walks can be tough, so you are in good shape.
- Experience with birding abroad can really come in handy on this trip.

Itinerary & Locations

The tour schedule is flexible and dependent on the weather, local conditions and observations.

07/08

Departure day: home - Jakarta

Binoculars packed? Triplist ready? Time to leave for Papua! Arrival will be on the 8th.

08/08

Jakarta - Sentani

Arrival in Jakarta. Some rest depending on the flight. In the evening we take a night flight to Irian Jaya.

09/08

from Sentani to Nimbokrang

We arrive in Sentani early in the morning. We then drive on to Nimbokrang, a journey of about two hours with several birding stops along the way.

After lunch we head out in search of fine species such as Papuan frogmouth and moustached treeswift.

10 - 12/08

Nimbokrang

We take several days to thoroughly explore the area around Nimbokrang.

This area is home to several birds of paradise, such as twelve-wired bird-of-paradise, lesser bird-of-paradise, king bird-of-paradise, shovel-billed kookaburra, hook-billed kingfisher and many others.

13/08

Nimbokrang - Sentani

Today, after an early breakfast, we'll head back to Sentani. That evening, we'll spend the night at a comfortable hotel.

14/08

Flight to Manokwari - Sioubri

This morning we'll take a flight to Manokwari. After lunch, we'll stock up on supplies for the coming days and drive in a 4x4 to the village of Sioubri in the Arfak Mountains.

Along the way, we'll see plenty of wonderful species again. After arriving at our guesthouse, we'll prepare for the trek over the next few days.

15 - 18/08

Sioubri

We head out into the area around Sioubri. First we venture into the jungle on foot and spend the night there.

During this stay we look out for Vogelkop bowerbird, long-tailed paradigalla, superb bird-of-paradise, mountain owlet-nightjar, masked bowerbird and magnificent bird-of-paradise. And those are just a few of the target species!



19/08

Arfak - Sorong - Malagufuk

We leave the Arfak Mountains behind and travel to Sorong. From there we continue on to Malagufuk.

20 - 21/08

Malagufuk

Malagufuk is the new Nimbokrang. Lowland species here are still remarkably approachable and many rarities are yet to be discovered. Blue-black kingfisher, red-breasted paradise-kingfisher, thick-billed ground pigeon, northern cassowary and many others are on the programme!

On 22/07 we travel back to Sorong in the afternoon.

22/08

Sorong - Waigeo

Today we travel to Waigeo. We make the most of the afternoon with a chance of some truly impressive sightings!...

23 - 24/08

Waigeo

We stay here at a wonderful spot by the sea. Our main target species are red bird-of-paradise and Wilson's bird-of-paradise.

We explore mainly on foot, but a boat trip and snorkelling are also among the options. Of course, the latter depends heavily on the wave conditions at that moment.

On the afternoon of 24/08 we travel back to Sorong.

25 - 26/08

Departure home: from Sorong via Jakarta

The overnight stay of 25 – 26/08 and meals are still included.

During the return journey (departure on 26/08) via Jakarta to Brussels or Amsterdam we have more than enough time to review our photos and look back on the impressive Papua experience. Arrival home is scheduled for 27/08.

Practical

Accommodation, transport and flights

All overnight stays are basic to standard quality. We regularly stay with local families. Essential basic facilities are provided everywhere. You experience the real Papua!

Although we usually stay in well-maintained lodges, be aware that toilets are not always equally clean, and that in some places there are only a few shared toilets or showers. You may also sleep on thinner (air) mattresses, so a personal inflatable sleeping mat can be a useful addition.

We walk at a relaxed pace and adjust the rhythm to the group. Porters are provided for the large luggage. You carry your own hand luggage. The presence of two guides ensures personal support throughout.

We also travel by minibus, ferry, 4x4 and domestic flights. Adventure guaranteed!

Given the demanding walks (early starts!), a good level of fitness and health is important. If you have heart conditions, shortness of breath, hip osteoarthritis, balance disorders or similar issues, we advise against participating in this tour.

International flights are not included. Once departure is guaranteed, we will contact you. Flight prices vary between approximately €1,500 and €3,000 per person. Flights can be booked through us or independently.

climate and clothing

As minimum temperatures can be around 5°C and maximums can reach 30°C, we pack a varied wardrobe. Due to high humidity it is advisable to choose fabrics that dry quickly, so avoid cotton and opt instead for synthetic materials such as nylon or polyester. These also dry faster after a day of walking and washing. We recommend choosing long sleeves and closed clothing so you can roll them down when needed (mosquitoes or sweat bees). A slightly thicker merino wool shirt makes a nice addition.

A rain jacket or poncho is essential on every walk. Be careful not to wear too many layers though, as it remains very hot and humid and you will perspire a lot. Also protect your backpack. A travel umbrella can be handy. A hat or cap for sun protection is essential, along with sunscreen. For the evenings, comfortable clothes are certainly no luxury, and even a fleece can be useful. Also make sure to bring



a torch or head torch as we also head out in the evenings.

This is a fairly intensive tour during which we will spend a great many hours in nature. Early starts (bring a head torch with spare batteries) to be in the field early, occasional long drives, meals in the forest, afternoon excursions and where possible evening searches for owls and nightbirds. Help the guide to stock up on sufficient provisions (food and drink) for the days ahead. Active participation is greatly appreciated. If something becomes too much, communicate this to the guide in a respectful and pleasant way.

We undertake long forest walks and climbs through hills and mountains. The forest trails can be steep, narrow and muddy. A good level of fitness and health is required. We recommend bringing two walking poles to help maintain balance on the muddy, steep forest paths. It is also practical to carry photographic equipment (attached to a neck sling) protected against mud, for example in a plastic bag or a small backpack (leaving both hands free for the walking poles).

There will definitely be sweating during the walks. Bring a water bottle or flask so you can carry at least 1 litre of water per forest walk.

What can you expect?

For this tour STARLING works closely with a specialised ground agent. This top team has travelled to Papua more than thirty times and has built a relationship of trust with the people in the villages. Thanks to them there is no language barrier on our tours and all logistics run smoothly. Making quick arrangements or adjusting plans based on local sightings or participants' target species: no problem at all!

Also expect an excellent price-quality ratio: this tour is by far the most affordable on the market, yet lasts longer than most other birding tours to this island. That gives us the flexibility to easily absorb unexpected setbacks such as bad weather. And we simply get to watch birds for longer, which means seeing more of them.

Price

7495 euro (Price per person)

Included

- access to hides/photo hides
- all camping gear (tents, sleeping bag, cooking gear, ...)
- all drinking water
- all excursions and entrance tickets for parks
- all meals
- all nights
- all transport at site
- enthusiast guiding by STARLING tour guide(s)
- insurance guarantee fund
- national flights and airport taxes
- specialized local guides

Excluded

- alcoholic beverages and soda
- international flights and airport taxes
- personal expenses
- tips for local collaborators (horeca, hotel,...)
- travel insurance and cancellation insurance (available for purchase through us)
- visa fees (if applicable)

