

## Eastern Australia Itinerary

[Link: Eastern Australia](#)

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### Tour Overview

Australia is a naturalist's dream come true! Australia harbors enormous diversity of habitats, including the world's longest coral reef (the 1260-mile long Great Barrier Reef).

Our birding tour focuses on eastern Australia, during the dry season. From northeast, where we have a chance for cassowary, bowerbirds and platypus, to the southeast's lyrebirds, fairy wrens, wallabies, albatrosses and penguins, our tour samples a good portion of Australia's scenery, avifauna and other wildlife.

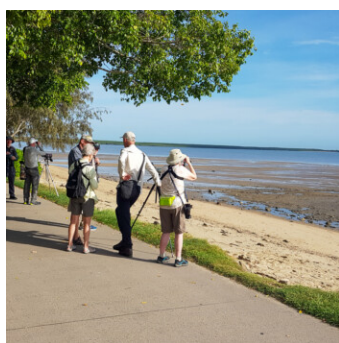
Endemism here in Australia is extraordinary; 5 non-passerine families and 15 passerine families are endemic to Australasia, plus diverse marsupials, pigeons (26 species), parrots (53 species) and seabirds (79 species).

A superb and exciting tour with mostly easy birding in comfortable surroundings - truly unforgettable!

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### Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrival in Cairns



Our Eastern Australia birding tour begins today. You can arrive anytime today.

## Day 2: Around Cairns



We begin our tour by spending the day at local birding locations including the Cairns Esplanade and adjacent mangroves, Centenary Lakes and Botanic Gardens. The Esplanade is a hotspot for waders on their southerly migration. Likely species include Red-capped Plover, Terek & Common Sandpipers, Great Knot, Grey-tailed Tattler, Beach Stone Curlew, Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Masked Lapwing, Australian Pelican, Royal Spoonbill, Eastern Great, Intermediate, Little and Eastern Reef Egrets, Striated Heron, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Gull-billed Tern, Silver Gull, Torresian Kingfisher, Green Oriole, Rainbow Lorikeet, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, Peaceful Dove, Mangrove Robin, and Yellow and Varied Honeyeaters. Centenary Lakes and the adjacent Botanic Gardens provide habitat for rainforest, fresh water and salt water wetlands. Species expected include Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Australian Brush-turkey, Pacific Black Duck, Peaceful Dove, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Papuan Frogmouth, Australian Swiftlet, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Rainbow Bee-eater, Black Butcherbird, Yellow-spotted and Brown Honeyeaters, Hornbill Friarbird, Varied Triller, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Spangled Drongo, Leaden Flycatcher, Magpie-lark, Metallic Starling and Olive-backed Sunbird. An after-dinner walk along the Esplanade provides a good opportunity to see Bush Stone Curlews. Overnight Cairns.

## Day 3: The Great Barrier Reef



Today we take a Great Barrier Reef cruise from the Cairns wharf. We board our comfortable vessel, the Ocean Spirit, at 8.00am for a relaxing two-hour cruise out to Michaelmas Cay, a true coral cay and bird sanctuary located 40km north-east of Cairns, part of the 2000 km long Great Barrier Reef. Thousands of ground-nesting seabirds occur here: Sooty and Crested Terns, Brown Noddy, Silver Gull, Brown Booby and Greater Frigatebird, with chances of rarer terns and boobies. There will be opportunities for a refreshing dip or snorkel in these beautiful waters. Overnight Cairns.

#### **Day 4: Port Douglas, Mount Lewis, Julatten and McDougall Road**



Port Douglas is a convenient location for birding with easy access to probably a greater range of habitats than any other location in Australia. Within an hour drive it is possible to visit mountain rainforest, wetlands, grassland, Eucalyptus woodlands and tropical savannah. In small patches of rainforest around Julatten are Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Emerald Dove, Noisy Pitta, Red-necked Crake, Buff-banded Rail, Black-faced Monarch, Red-browed Finch and an array of honeyeaters including Blue-faced, McLeay's and Graceful Honeyeaters, along with many other species. The rainforest at Mount Lewis is home to most of the wet tropics endemics including Atherton Scrubwren, Fernwren, Mountain Thornbill, Bridled Honeyeater, Chowchilla and Tooth-billed Bowerbird. In the savanna, there are Australian Bustards, Red-winged Parrots, Tawny Frogmouth, Squatter Pigeon, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Pale-headed Rosella, Brown Treecreeper, and Great Bowerbird. Blue-faced Parrot Finch is high on most birders list for this area and time will be spent looking for this elusive species. Night in in Port Douglas or Julattan.

#### **Day 5: Daintree River Cruise**



Our destination today is the Daintree River, where we take a pleasant boat cruise through farmland and rainforest on the look-out for Great-billed Heron, several kingfishers including Little, White-rumped Swiftlet, Large-billed Gerygone, Spectacled Monarch, Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Black-necked Stork and Green Oriole, and saltwater crocodile. We then go to the end of Stewart Creek Road to look for wading birds including spoonbills, Spectacled Monarch, and several fairy-wrens, honeyeaters and cuckoo-shrikes. Afterwards, we drive to the coast to our accommodation in Port Douglas or Julattan where we stay for two nights.

#### **Days 6 and 7: Atherton Tablelands**



The Atherton Tableland is a region of beautiful scenery with lakes and waterfalls, green pastures, open woodlands and scattered wetlands nestled in national parks and state forests, as well as Queensland's highest mountains rising to over 1600m. Birding can be superb including Sarus Crane, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Pied Monarch, Chowchilla, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Golden Bowerbird, Tooth-billed and Spotted Catbirds and Victoria's Riflebird. On our drive, we visit wetlands for Green and Cotton Pygmy-Geese and Brolga, and woodlands for Squatter Pigeon, Apostlebird, Great Bowerbird, Black-throated Finch, and the distinctive local race of Brown Treecreeper. We stay near Yungaburra, a National Trust village that has a platypus viewing platform. Two nights in Lake Eacham.

## **Day 8: Back to Cairns and Cairns Esplanade**



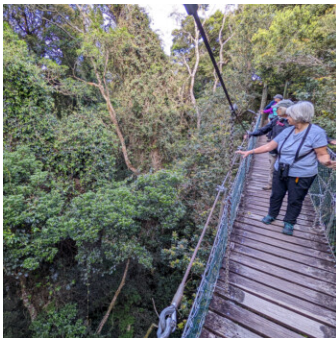
We head back to Cairns, stopping at Davies Creek to look for Rufous Owl and White-browed Robin and Kuranda where we have a reasonable chance of seeing Southern Cassowary. Time and tide permitting, we will check the Esplanade and other locations for any species we might have missed on the first day and any new arrivals. Overnight Cairns.

## **Day 9: Transfer to Lamington National Park**



We catch an early morning flight to Brisbane and drive to the Green Mountains in Lamington National Park. This park covers most of the spectacular Lamington Plateau, a geologically fascinating plateau with deep gorges and caves that drops into the caldera of an extinct volcano and is covered in temperate rainforest. A feature attraction is the amazing Albert's Lyrebird, and we make a special attempt to find this incredible mimic. Other goodies include Logrunner, Green Catbird, Regent Bowerbird, Paradise Riflebird and Marbled Frogmouth among others. We stay two nights at O'Reilly's Guesthouse.

## **Day 10: Lamington Park**



We have a full day of birding in the area surrounding O'Reilly's in Lamington National Park.

## **Day 11: Transfer to Brisbane Airport and flight to Sydney**

We spend the day transferring to Brisbane airport for an afternoon flight to Sydney. On arrival, we stay in Sydney or transfer to Kiama for two nights, depending on the location of our pelagic birding trip the next day.



## Day 12: Pelagic Trip



Today we have an all-day optional pelagic trip out of Kiama or Sydney to the edge of the continental shelf. Beyond the shelf, the ocean floor drops abruptly to depths of more than 4000 m. We could encounter a plethora of seabirds – shearwaters including Flesh-footed, Fluttering, Short-tailed & Wedge-tailed, Pomarine Jaeger, Great-winged & Solander Petrels, Shy & Wandering Albatrosses, and much more.

## Day 13: Barren Grounds



We visit coastal heathlands of Barren Grounds Nature Reserve for a chance at the critically endangered Eastern Bristlebird, as well as Powerful Owl, Superb Lyrebird, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Southern Emu-wren, Brush Wattlebird, Rockwarbler, Pilotbird and Ground Parrot. Overnight in the Kiama.

## Days 14 and 15: Blue Mountains and Capertee Valley



The Blue Mountains feature some of the most awe inspiring scenery in Eastern Australia, and some great birding too. From the tiny Spotted Pardalotes to the legendary Superb Lyrebird, and perhaps even the endangered Glossy Black-Cockatoo, our tour through the mountains will be breathtaking. We will also sample some of the local wetlands and lakes where in search of Blue-billed, Musk, and even Freckled Ducks. Australasian Shoveler, Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebes, and a host of other waterbirds can be expected as well. But it is the Capertee Valley, one of New South Wales' premier birding locales, that will really impress. The isolated valley is a mixture of open eucalyptus woodland and open grasslands, which are home to a fantastic diversity of birds as well as wallabies, wallaroos, kangaroos, and Eastern Wombat. The potential bird list for Capertee Valley is long and includes Little Lorikeet, Turquoise Parrot, Plum-headed Finch, Diamond Firetail, Pallid Cuckoo, Olive-backed Oriole, several Woodswallows, and Red-capped Robin. There's a chance for the charismatic Crested Tit-Shrike, the cooperatively-breeding White-winged Chough, and the iconic Zebra Finch. The critically endangered Regent Honeyeater also occurs in the valley, and if luck is really on our side we may just see one. Nights in Wallerawang.

## Day 16: Transfer to Sydney



Today we spend time looking for species missed up to now, perhaps Black Duck, Chestnut Teal, Swamphen, Wandering and Plumed Whistling-Ducks, or Fuscous, White-plumed and White-naped Honeyeaters. Overnight Sydney.

## Day 17: International flight departs Sydney or transfer to Tasmania

Our Eastern Australia birding tour draws to a close and you will transfer to the airport for flights home or connections to our Tasmania tour.

# What to Expect

### Overview

The Eastern Australia tour is a moderately paced birding tour, with the chance to also see some fantastic mammals. Our daily travel schedule varies; most days involve a full day of birding, usually with a picnic lunch in a prime birding spot, other days we will be taking boat trips or driving to a new location.

### Food

We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. Sometimes we will have optional pre-breakfast walks. We often take a picnic lunch in the field, but will occasionally stop at a restaurant or cafe for lunch. Dinner is usually at the lodge or a nearby restaurant. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review the day's activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

### Accommodation

We generally stay in 3 to 4-star hotels or lodges in locations close to where we want to go birding.

### Walking

The walking on this tour is easy to moderate walking and hiking, with frequent short forays away from the van. The longest walk is around 2 km (1.2 miles) with some steepness.

### Driving

Driving distances vary from short to moderate, with long drives of up to 3 hours on a few days. We make frequent stops during each day's travel.

### Climate

Climate of these regions changes from seasonably warm to mild as we head further south. October is normally settled, with temperatures in Cairns averaging 24° C (75° F) with a humidity of 54%, very pleasant for birding. In Cairns a light jacket is recommended for our trip to the reef in case onshore winds are cool. Most days are warm or hot, dry and sunny, but overcast conditions are frequent with possible rain and high humidity in coastal areas. The sun can be intense, so sunscreen and a brimmed hat are advised. Wet weather protection is recommended with light waterproof pants and

jacket ideal.

### **Internal Flights**

Our itinerary includes two internal flights, not included in the price of the tour. These will be booked by Eagle-Eye Tours for you, and the cost added to your invoice.

### **Boat Trips**

There are also two pelagic trips and a river cruise on this tour, which are included in the price. Please see details below.

The Great Barrier Reef Cruise will be on board a comfortable, air-conditioned 32m (105ft) sailing and motor catamaran, this is a two-hour long cruise with the opportunity to swim, snorkel or scuba dive. There will be bathrooms on board, as well as a buffet lunch. There is a sunny top deck, and a shaded main deck. Water temperatures range from 22-29° C (75-85 ° F). Please note that drones are not permitted.

The Daintree River Cruise is a 2-hour cruise on calm waters. The boat itself will depend on group size, but it will have a roof for shade, and swivel chairs. There will not be a bathroom on board, but there are public toilets by the jetty.

The Continental Shelf pelagic trip is a full day excursion. The vessel is typically a 45' fiberglass monohull, and once we are offshore, about 22 nautical miles from the coast, conditions may become choppy. Bottled water is provided onboard, and we will bring our own snacks.

For any of these boat trips, plans could change slightly if reports of vagrant or accidental species, within reasonable driving distance, are received, or if there is any unfavorable weather.

Please note, those who have experienced motion or seasickness in the past should consult their doctor regarding seasickness medications, and take them as prescribed. Participants are responsible for their own medications, as well as bringing suitable sun-protective clothing, hats and sunscreen, for comfort throughout the day.

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## **What's Included**

### **Tour Price Includes**

- Price includes 10% Australian GST
- All accommodations
- All meals
- Ground transportation
- Three boat trips included - pelagic from Kaima, Great Barrier Reef trip from Cairns and a trip on the Daintree River.
- One guide and vehicle with 4 - 8 participants, two guides and vehicles with 9 - 12 participants

### **Tour Price Does Not Include**

- Two internal flights additional (~AUD\$300 total)
  - Travel to and from start/end location
  - Travel Insurance
  - Items of a personal nature
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