Eagle-Eye Tours

Tropical Australia Itinerary

Link: Tropical Australia

Tour Overview

Tropical Australia around Darwin is humid, lush and green with wonderfully rich and colorful birdlife, and we visit several renowned birding hotspots to sample marvelous wildlife. Knuckey's Lagoon, Fogg Dam and the spectacular Kakadu National Park are havens for huge numbers of birds and diverse birding highlights including several endemics, plus internationally renowned Aboriginal art sites. Pine Creek hosts several rare species and especially raptors. A special tropical Australia birding tour to special places!

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Darwin



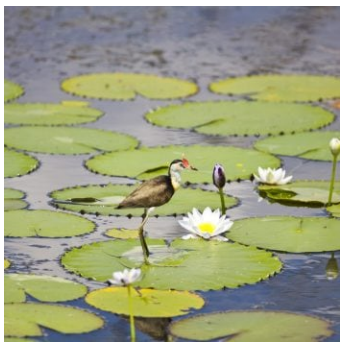
Our tropical Australia birding tour starts in the evening in our hotel in the northern city of Darwin for a welcome dinner. Night in Darwin.

Day 2: Darwin



We spend the day visiting Holmes Jungle, East Point, Lee Point and Buffalo Creek. Birds likely to be seen include Arafura and Northern Fantails, White-gaped Honeyeater, Forest Kingfisher, Silver-crowned Friarbird and Restless Flycatcher, with another chance at the splendid Rainbow Pitta. In the mangroves at Buffalo Creek we encounter another suite of birds which includes Red-headed Honeyeater, Green-backed Gerygone, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Grey Whistler and Red winged Parrot. The rarely seen Chestnut Rail and Large-tailed Nightjar frequent the area at dusk. We will also visit the Botanical Gardens to look for Rufous and Barking Owls. Night in Darwin.

Day 3: Fogg Dam and Kakadu National Park



After breakfast we drive to the Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve is one of several parks in the lower Adelaide River catchment that provide havens for wildlife, especially its spectacular diversity of water birds including Comb-crested Jacanas, Black-necked Stork, Straw-necked and Glossy Ibis, Pied Heron, Plumed and Wandering Whistling Ducks, Whiskered and Caspian Terns and Brahminy Kite. Saltwater and Freshwater Crocodiles are also found here. We walk the boardwalk at the edge of the lake looking for Little Kingfisher, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Shining Flycatcher, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Rufous-banded Honeyeater and Broad-billed Flycatcher. As we make our way to Kakadu, we may make stops at waterholes for Crimson, Long-tailed and Double-barred Finches. Other stops might produce Mangrove Golden Whistler and along the route Black-faced Woodswallow, Marsh and Spotted Harriers, Black-shouldered Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Black-breasted Buzzard, Red-backed Kingfisher and Zitting Cisticola are among the possible species. We arrive at Kakadu National Park in the afternoon. Kakadu, located 240 km east of Darwin, is Australia’s largest terrestrial national park. Kakadu covers almost 20,000 square kilometres and is a place of high ecological and biological diversity. It extends from the coast and estuaries in the north for 200 km south, and 100 km east to west, through floodplains, billabongs and lowlands to rocky ridges and stone country. Kakadu is home to a range of rare and endemic plants and animals, including more than one-third of Australia's bird species and one-quarter of its freshwater and estuarine fish species. Arriving into Kakadu National Park, we will bird the wetlands, where the numbers of water birds can be spectacular and we pay particular attention to species not seen at earlier sites. We will visit the Bowali Visitors Centre before going in to the town of Jabiru to check in to our accommodation which for the next three nights is Lakeside Caravan Park, owned by the local Aboriginal people. We will schedule an optional evening outing to look for Barking Owls.

Day 4: Kakadu National Park



A dawn cruise on the famous Yellow Waters Billabong is the perfect start to the day. The early flights of the waterbirds are a great spectacle and this is an opportunity to get close to, and photograph, huge numbers of birds. Large Saltwater Crocodiles are also a feature of this cruise. White-bellied Sea-Eagles have territories along the billabong, large numbers of Nankeen Night-Herons roam the banks and Bar-breasted and Banded Honeyeaters live in the riverside vegetation. The agenda today is dependent on what roads are open but will include internationally renowned Aboriginal art sites at Nourlangie Rock. Birding highlights could include the endemic Banded Fruit-Dove, White-lined Honeyeater and as well as Partridge Pigeon, Little Corella, Northern Rosella, Little Woodswallow and Sandstone Shrike-thrush.

Day 5: Kakadu National Park



An early morning start at Nourlangie Rock and Angbangbang Billabong to provide a good chance of seeing the endemics and other species. After a break in the middle of the day we travel north to the Bardedjilidji walk and the art sites at Ubirr. Birding highlights include Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, several finches, Paperbark Flycatcher, White-winged Triller and many more.

Day 6: Kakadu and Pine Creek



Travelling south through Kakadu towards Pine Creek provides the opportunity to look for the Red Goshawk, Brown Goshawk, Australian Hobby, Whistling Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk and Black and Brown Falcons are also found in this area. Masked Finch, Weebill, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Brown Quail, Brush and Black-eared Cuckoos and Variegated Fairy-wren are all possible at random roadside stops and at Bukbukluk. The little town of Pine Creek is a good location for Varied Lorikeet, Cockatiel, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Red-collared Lorikeet, Diamond Dove, Striated Pardalote, Magpie Lark, Crested Pigeon, Black-chinned, Blue-faced and White-throated Honeyeater, Crested Shrike-tit, Owlet Nightjar and sometimes Gouldian Finches. The nearby sewage treatment plant is home to Black-fronted Plover, Black-winged Stilt and Grey Teal whilst Chestnut-backed Button-Quail have been seen at the nearby cemetery. Night in Pine Creek.

Day 7: Pine Creek and Katherine



An early start will be necessary today to visit the Edith Falls area, arriving before dawn at a location where beautiful Gouldian Finches and many other species come for a morning drink. Hooded Parrots, Cockatiels, Rufous Whistlers, Black-tailed Treecreepers, and other finches are regular visitors to the waterhole. We will spend the remainder of the day birding sites around the Pine Creek and Katherine region, including Ferguson River, and other productive habitats in search of species we may still be missing. Katherine and its surrounding woodlands provide opportunities for a variety of Top End birds, and we will continue to target key species throughout the day. Night in Katherine.

Day 8: Katherine to Darwin



This morning we depart Katherine and travel back toward Darwin. The return journey provides additional opportunities to search for species missed earlier in the tour, including the silver-backed form of the Grey Butcherbird, which is endemic to the Northern Territory. Time permitting, we will make additional birding stops around Darwin before our final night. Night in Darwin.

Day 9: Darwin and Departure

Our tropical Australia birding tour ends today in Darwin. Those continuing on to Eastern Australia birding tour will take a morning flight to Cairns. Others can depart anytime today.

What to Expect

Overview
The Tropical Australia tour is a moderately paced birding tour. You can expect early mornings , sometimes as early as 5:00–5:30 a.m., particularly on October departures when temperatures can be especially high. These early starts allow us to take advantage of the best birding conditions before the heat builds. We generally take an afternoon break to avoid the hottest part of the day. While the birding experience is incredible, it's important to note that long days in the field mixed with the heat may be physically demanding for some.

The itinerary may be adjusted depending on tides, weather, bird activity and the needs of the group. In addition to birdwatching, we visit Aboriginal rock art and cultural heritage sites, which are an important part of the tour.

Our guides will not be using laser pointers on this tour due to local regulations.

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 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.

Meal and rest breaks are an important part of the daily schedule, particularly during very hot weather.

Accommodation
Generally we stay in standard hotels and motels in locations close to where we want to go birding. Cellular reception and Wi-Fi can be quite limited in some of the remote areas we visit, so expect spotty or minimal connectivity at certain accommodations.

Walking
This tour involves easy to moderate walking and hiking, as well as short forays away from the van.

One of our longer walks is approximately 3.5 km (just over 2 miles) at Burrungkuy, where we climb to the Kunwarddehwardde Lookout to look for White-lined Honeyeaters, a sandstone endemic species. This involves some off-track walking on uneven ground and stepping over fallen trees. Our most challenging walk is Nourlangie, which has steep climbs.

At Fogg Dam, we may undertake a longer walk of approximately 4 km return, depending on conditions and the group's abilities. At Ubirr, the approximately 1-km walk to the Nadab Floodplain Lookout includes an uphill section that some guests may find challenging.

Although walking distances are generally moderate, the combination of uneven terrain, steep sections and high temperatures can make some outings more physically demanding. Guests should be comfortable walking in hot weather, wear suitable footwear and carry sufficient drinking water.

Where practical, participants who prefer not to undertake more challenging sections may be able to remain in a shaded area or near the vehicle, subject to the guide's instructions.

Driving
There is a mixed amount of driving on this tour, some days have short drives of 30 minutes and others up to 2.75 hours.

Climate
The climate of tropical Australia is hot, with high humidity, especially in the Darwin region. Overcast conditions are frequent with possible rain and high humidity in coastal areas.

Inland areas of Kakadu can be considerably drier, with open savanna and woodland landscapes rather than the lush tropical rainforest some visitors may expect.

Expect daytime temperatures around 32–34°C (90–93°F) and nighttime/morning lows around 24–26°C (75–79°F). Temperatures can be higher, particularly during October departures, and the intense sun and limited shade can make outdoor activities physically demanding.

The sun can be intense, so sunscreen and a brimmed hat are advised. Lightweight, breathable clothing and adequate drinking water are also important, particularly during longer walks. Wet weather protection is recommended with light waterproof pants and jacket ideal.

Boat Trips
We do a dawn cruise on the famous Yellow Waters Billabong located in Kakadu National Park. This is a 1.5–2-hour cruise. Breakfast will be served on the cruise. Make sure you have your camera ready to get amazing photos of this incredible landscape and the bountiful wildlife! Bring some water, a hat and sunscreen. Insect repellent is recommended. Dress comfortably. There is a toilet available on board.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes
• Price includes 10% Australian GST
• All accommodations
• All meals and soft drinks
• Ground transportation
• One guide and vehicle with 4 - 8 participants, two guides and vehicles with 9 - 12 participants

Tour Price Does Not Include
• Travel to and from start/end location
• Travel Insurance
• Items of a personal nature
• Alcoholic beverages