

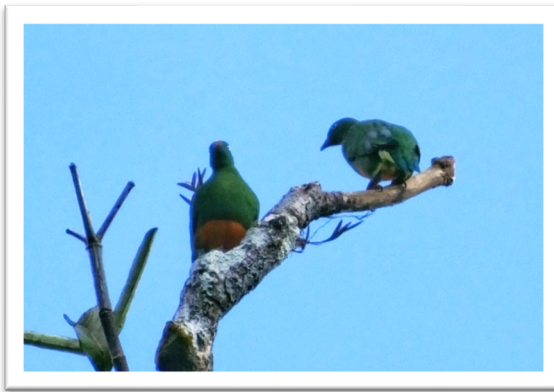
Snorkeling, Sightseeing and Wildlife Watching Tour with 2 British Visitors in Raja Ampat and Rainforest of Vogelkop Region in West Papua

A trip report by Charles Roring for Vacation Indonesia Tours (VIT Tours)

When Mr. Darwin Sumang of VIT Tours contacted me to guide Gary and Esther McKerracher - two British visitors - to Raja Ampat and Klasow valley in Sorong and Tambrau regencies of South West Papua province, I immediately said yes. I guided them from 3 to 12 March in these regencies to watch various kinds of birds and wild animals in rainforest as well as unique tropical marine creatures in coral reef areas

Raja Ampat Islands

I started our tour by picking up Gary and Esther in Sorong city and organized their transfer to Waigeo island in Raja Ampat. We stayed in Raja Ampat Dive Resort near Saporkren village. In the first few days of our combined birding, snorkeling as well as sightseeing tour in Raja Ampat, we saw more than 40s species of forest and coastal birds including Lesser Frigatebird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Pacific Swallow, Eastern Osprey, Gurney's Eagle, Helmetted Friarbird, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Papuan Frogmouth, Willie Wagtail, Beach Kingfisher, Pacific Reef Heron, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Common Sandpiper, Lesser crested Tern, Coconut Lorikeet, Mimic Honeyeater, Puff back Honeyeater, Hooded Butcherbird, Eclectus Parrot, Spice Imperial Pigeon, Pinon Imperial Pigeon, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Yellow-faced Myna, Red-bird of Paradise, Glossy-mantled Manucode, Red Bird of Paradise, Wilson's Bird of Paradise, Yellow-billed Kingfisher, Island Leaf Warbler, Blyth's Hornbill, Mustached Treeswift.



We enjoyed sightseeing, birding and snorkeling around Waigeo island, Friwen island, Gam island, Mansuar island, Arborek, and Piaynemo, Yenbuba, Mioskon island and Five Rocks as well as Saporkren village.

The Friwenwall provided us with magnificent view of softcoral which was the natural habitat of a lot of species of reef fish including parrotfish, anemonefish, humphead wrasse and moorish idol. Eventhough we experienced heavy rain in the islet, we continued to swim over the coral

reef that was growing along the wall. It looked scary for first time snorkelers but the underwater view of the marine life was very beautiful.

In Yenbuba straight, we saw Black-tipped Reefshark, turtle and huge trevally as well as hundreds of marine creatures.

We also enjoyed snorkeling in Arborek where we were surrounded by hundreds of species of fish including batfish, jackfish, sardines, and a lot more. The pillars of Arborek's jetty were the site for seeing sea fans.

We stayed at a beach resort that was surrounded by tropical trees. They allowed us to watch birds, butterflies, and other insects without having to walk long distances.

The resort was the place for watching birds, seeing reefish and enjoying beautiful seascapes.

I hope that I can make a lot of beautiful pictures and videos of them.

We enjoyed swimming and snorkeling in the coral reef areas of Friwen Wall, Arborek, Yenbuba, Mioskon, Five Rocks, and Saporkren. We saw a lot of marine creatures including various anemonefish, surgeonfish, damselfish, trevally, sweetlips, moorish idol, butterflyfish, black tip sharks, and etc.



Klasow Valley

The next leg of our tour was Klasow valley. This huge valley was covered by tropical rainforest which was the habitat of various species of birds of paradise and other tropical birds.

We spent 5 days and 4 nights in the villages of Klabili and Malagufuk. Local villagers who accompanied us were skillful in spotting birds and wild animals. We watched the Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise, Lesser Birds of Paradise, King Bird of Paradise, Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher, as well as Palm Cockatoo, Helmeted Friarbird, Lowland Peltop, Boyer's Cuckooshrike, Black Lory, Azure Kingfisher, Red-cheeked Parrot, Ruby-throated Myzomela and a lot more.

Walking along the sides of water stream in Klabili village, we were able to see Blyth's hornbill, Northern Fantail, Azure Kingfisher, Yellow-billed Kingfisher as well as Yellow-faced Myna and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. We also saw monitor lizard that was climbing a tree. Local people called it: soa-soa.

While watching Lesser Birds of Paradise, we had to move several times in order to find the best position on the forest floor to see the paradise bird that was sitting among the branches and thick green leaves. Fortunately, I was able to take pictures of the bird in the last moment before heavy rain started to fall and forced us to leave the forest and return to the gueshouse. Night walk along the boardwalk allowed us to see nocturnal animals including Papuan Frogmouth, Marbled Frogmouth, Striped Possum, White-lipped Green Frog, Flying Fox, and various kinds of insects.

In total, we were able to see 80 species of birds and hundreds of species of reef fish during the tour.

During the whole part of the tour, I used my old Fujifilm HS 50EXR camera and Fujifilm XQ2 for taking pictures of birds and marine life. To enhance our birding and wildlife watching experience, I used a pair of 10×50 roof prism binoculars that were mounted on a tripod using an adaptor. Fujifilm HS50EXR was a bridge camera that was supplied with 42× permanent zoom lens that was equivalent to 1,000 mm lens. This allowed me to shot birds that were sitting on the branches of tall trees including the tiny ones that hopped on the twigs such as Frilled Monarch, Yellow-bellied Longbill and Yellow-legged Flycatcher.

Klasow valley in the villages of Klabili and Malagufuk were very good sites for birding and wildlife watching tours.

Back to Sorong city, we headed to Swissbel hotel to take a rest and for them to prepare for another trip in this wonderful country of Indonesia.