

# Australia

## Blue Mountains, Cairns & O'Reillys

2022

Thursday 3rd - Monday 21st November (19 days)  
Small group tour with Peter Taylor



The subtle pastel pinks and greys of the gorgeous Galah, a widespread species in New South Wales © tour participant Rupert Pye

Running in November, **Limosa's birding tour to eastern Australia** has all the ingredients for a classic wildlife trip to 'Down Under'. Featuring a host of Australian endemic birds and mammals, it is a journey that will take you from the beautiful Blue Mountains around Sydney, north to Cairns, where we thrill at the bird-rich rainforests of tropical North Queensland and the marvels of the Great Barrier Reef. The trip then concludes with the special magic of three nights at famous O'Reilly's Rainforest Lodge, in the scenic Green Mountains above Brisbane, so join our resident Aussie expert Peter Taylor for this exceptional Eastern Australia birdwatching tour!

### Highlights

- Everything from cockatoos and currawongs to kangaroos and Duck-billed Platypus
- Southern Cassowary, Golden. Satin and Regent Bowerbirds, Albert's and Superb Lyrebirds seen last time
- Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher, Noisy Pitta and Victoria's Riflebird
- Early morning birding cruise on the Lower Daintree River
- The beautiful Blue Mountains, north to the rainforests of tropical Queensland
- Day trip to Michaelmas Cay and the Great Barrier Reef
- The special magic of O'Reilly's Rainforest Lodge with daily 'muggings' by parrots and rosellas!
- Small group tour with a maximum of 7 participants
- Expertly led by Limosa's resident Australian bird guide and naturalist, Peter Taylor

## What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- 15 nights at comfortable hotels and wildlife lodges in Eastern Australia
- All main meals included with drinking water provided during the day
- Minibus transport
- Two great boat trips: Daintree River and the Great Barrier Reef
- All excursions, entry fees, permits, local guide fees, tour-based tips and taxes



Close encounter with a Southern Cassowary in Queensland  
© tour participant Bob Martin

## Outline Itinerary

### Days 1-2

Depart UK for Sydney

### Day 3

Morning arrival in Sydney. We head to Royal National Park. Jamberoo (2 nights)

### Day 4

Barren Grounds, Fitzroy Falls and Minnamurra Rainforest Centre

### Days 5-6

We explore the beautiful Blue Mountains visiting the Three Sisters, Blackheath and Megalong Valley. Katoomba (2 nights)

### Day 7

Bird specialities of Lithgow and Capertee Valley. Glen Davis (1 night)

### Day 8

We return to Sydney and fly north to Cairns, in tropical North Queensland. We look for waders along Cairns' famous waterfront. Cairns (2 nights)

### Day 9

Full day trip to Michaelmas Cay and the Great Barrier Reef

### Days 10-11

We head into the Atherton Tablelands and visit the Lake Eacham crater lake. Evening looking for Duck-billed Platypus. Chambers Rainforest Lodge, Lake Eacham (2 nights)

### Day 12

We visit Centenary Lakes, Cattana Wetland and Redden Island. Mossman (1 night)



Regent Bowerbird, O'Reilly's © tour participant Bob Martin

#### Days 13-14

We enjoy an early morning birding cruise on the Daintree River and explore Daintree National Park and Mt Lewis. Kingfisher Park (2 nights)

#### Days 15-17

Return to Cairns and fly to Brisbane and head up into the lovely Green Mountains to experience the magic of O'Reilly's. O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat (3 nights)

#### Days 18-19

We depart Brisbane, arriving in the UK the next day.

## Tour Overview

Isolated from the rest of the world's landmasses for over 60 million years, evolution in Australia has taken a very separate path. Whilst the continent's two mammal groups, the kangaroos, wallabies and other marsupials, plus egg-laying monotremes such as the Duck-billed Platypus, are rightly famous, just as remarkable is that almost half of Australia's regular bird species are found nowhere else - a greater proportion of endemic birds than any other country in the world.

Journeying from the southern temperate zones up into the northern tropics, our birding tour to Eastern Australia tour commences in Sydney, where a visit to beautiful Royal National Park should provide an excellent introduction to the birds of this island continent.

In the New South Wales Southern Uplands, the famous Barren Grounds heathland should be near the peak of its spring wildflower displays. The range-restricted Eastern Bristlebird and Pilotbird frequent this habitat and we will make a special effort to find the scarce Ground Parrot - a seldom seen species that is active primarily at daybreak and dusk. Climbing up into the beautiful Blue Mountains and Capertee Valley, Turquoise Parrot, Superb Lyrebird, Diamond Firetail and the endangered Regent Honeyeater are among a range of specialities we will look for along with flocks of rowdy and impressively big Yellow-tailed and Glossy Black Cockatoos.

Leaving Sydney, we next fly north to Cairns. This is one of Australia's top birding spots and the shorebirds, for example, are outstanding on the Waterfront, with everything from Great Knot to Beach Thick-knee.

Our visit to tropical North Queensland will include a trip out from Cairns to enjoy the marvels of Michaelmas Cay and the Great Barrier Reef, with amazing breeding seabirds and spectacular marine life.



Victoria's Riflebird © tour participant Bob Martin

We will also explore the bird-rich forests of the Atherton Tablelands for the likes of Golden Bowerbird, Tooth-billed Catbird and the iridescent Victoria's Riflebird, as well as looking for Southern Cassowary and the amazing Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher.

On another day, we plan to take a cruise on the Daintree River where the possibilities include Little Kingfisher and Great-billed Heron, before flying south to Brisbane where our tour concludes with three nights at the incomparable O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. The birding at this well-known location is simply superb and well-stocked feeders (not to mention inattentive birdwatchers with food in their hands!) attract immaculate Regent and Satin Bowerbirds, along with crowds of colourful Crimson Rosellas and Australian King Parrots. With wallaby-like Red-necked Pademelons foraging on the lawn, it should be a spectacular end to our holiday.

Our resident Aussie guide **Peter Taylor** joined the Limosa team in 2008 and has since led all of our Australia tours. Pack your bags and join us for very best of Eastern Australia on this classic birdwatching tour to 'Down Under'!

## Daily Itinerary

### Days 1- 3

#### FLY TO SYDNEY: ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

Our birdwatching tour to Eastern Australia commences with a flight to Sydney where we arrive on the morning of Day 3.

We will be met on arrival by our guide Peter Taylor and head for the Royal National Park which is the second oldest in the world and offers a gentle but excellent introduction to Australian birdlife. Avian specialities could include Rainbow Lorikeet, Red-browed Finch, Australian Magpie, New Holland Honeyeater and the dazzling Superb Fairywren.

Other exciting birds we should find in this massive park include raucous Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and gaudy Crimson Rosellas, along with numerous honeyeaters, wattlebirds and thornbills. We are likely to hear the astonishing whip-crack of the Eastern Whipbird from deep within the undergrowth, whilst regal White-bellied Sea Eagles soar overhead.

#### *Night Jamberoo*

### Day 4

#### BARREN GROUNDS & MINNAMURRA RAINFOREST

Our birding begins in earnest today with a visit to Barren Grounds, where we have a chance of finding the remarkable Ground Parrot.

This highland area above the coastal escarpment is similar to a European heathland and should be nearing the peak of its wildflower displays. Some of the special birds we will look for include Eastern Bristlebird, Pilotbird and Southern Emuwren.

Nearby is the Minnamurra Rainforest Centre, where we can follow the boardwalks through a range of rainforest environments and, with luck, may catch sight of Superb Lyrebirds that forage through the leaf litter on the forest floor.



Satin Bowerbird © Dr Kevin Elsby, wildlifeontheweb.co.uk

Also present are Large-billed Scrubwrens, the aptly named Top-Knot Pigeon and Green Catbird that genuinely does *miaow!*

We plan to return at twilight when the uncommon Ground Parrot becomes active and we might even be fortunate enough to see a Common Wombat or hear a Greater Sooty Owl. *Night Jamberoo*

#### Days 5 - 6

##### THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Leaving Jamberoo, we head north towards the Blue Mountains, with our first planned stop being at the spectacular Fitzroy Falls in Morton National Park. Here we will hope to see flocks of rowdy Glossy and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, as well as Gang-gang Cockatoos and a host of smaller birds such as Beautiful Firetail, Leaden Flycatcher and Eastern Yellow Robin.

After spending the night at Katoomba, the following morning we plan to explore around Mount Victoria, Blackheath and Katoomba, where we hope to find some of the specialities of the region, including Superb Lyrebird, Rock Warbler and Satin Flycatcher.

We will then head down through lush rainforest to the open woodlands of the Megalong Valley where White-winged Choughs, a myriad of honeyeaters species and White-throated Treecreeper can be found. Satin Bowerbird also occurs in this region and this will be the first of several chances to find a bower, where we will hopefully also seeing the 'owner' in attendance, guarding his display of bright blue treasures. *Two nights Katoomba*

#### Day 7

##### CAPERTEE VALLEY, GLEN DAVIS

We will leave the Blue Mountains heading for Capertee, with intended stops at the Lithgow Sewage Ponds and Lake Wallace. Here there are chances of Blue-billed, Pink-eared and the very unusual Musk Duck amongst a good range of waterfowl.

The Capertee Valley is a stronghold for a number of rare bird species and the fabulous variety of specialities could include the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. Other possibilities include Turquoise Parrot, Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin, Speckled Warbler, Little Lorikeet, Black-chinned, Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, White-browed Babbler and many more.

After lunch, we will continue to explore the valley, arriving at a waterhole in the late afternoon to watch an array of honeyeaters, parrots and pigeons coming for their afternoon drink. There could also be good numbers of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, with Red-necked Wallabies and Wallaroos also possible as the setting sun turns the majestic cliffs golden red.

Our accommodation is at Glen Davis where we stay in a historic hotel, which has been beautifully renovated with amazing views of the towering escarpments of the Wollemi National Park. Not all rooms have private facilities but the hotel is in such a magnificent setting that we think it is more than worth it. This is also the only way to experience sunset and sunrise in the valley and it gives us more chance of seeing kangaroos! *Night Glen Davis*

**Day 8****FLY SYDNEY TO CAIRNS, CAIRNS WATERFRONT**

Today is mainly a travel day, so after an early walk around historic Glen Davis, we return to Sydney where we catch an early afternoon flight north to Cairns, in tropical North Queensland.

This is often considered to be at the centre of one of Australia's very best birding areas and depending on our flight schedule, there may be time for a quick visit to the famous Cairns waterfront after we arrive. This is a splendid place for waders and the possibilities include Terek and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Grey-tailed Tattler, Great Knot and both Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers. *Night Cairns*

**Day 9****PELAGIC BOAT TRIP TO MICHAELMAS CAY & THE GREAT BARRIER REEF**

We will take a cruise to the largest continuous stretch of coral on earth: the Great Barrier Reef. Passing Black-naped Terns, which appear gleaming white against the tropical blue sea, we plan to go ashore on Michaelmas Cay, a sandy islet crammed with breeding seabirds. There should be good numbers of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies and with Brown Boobies and Great Frigatebirds overhead, this is a truly magical place.

Despite all the wonderful birds, the chance to snorkel over the reef or to view the vast range of underwater life from a glass-bottomed boat may be the 'ultimate experience' for some.

It will certainly be with great reluctance that we leave this window on to another world of multicoloured fish, corals and noddies and return to the mainland for dinner and a second overnight stay in Cairns. *Night Cairns*



The appropriately named Rainbow Lorikeet © tour participant Bob Martin

**Days 10 - 11****ATHERTON TABLELANDS, LAKE BARRINE AND LAKE EACHAM**

Leaving coastal town of Cairns behind us, we will make the easy drive up into the Atherton Tablelands and visit the crater lakes of Lake Barrine and Lake Eacham. This rich volcanic area harbours some of the best rainforests in Australia where the trees are festooned with epiphytic ferns and mosses and mighty birdwing butterflies flit through the shady understorey. There will be enormous strangler figs draping their roots over their host trees and the birds we will look for include Tooth-billed Catbird, the aptly named Golden Bowerbird and beautiful Wompoo Fruit Dove.

We stay at a superbly situated lodge located amidst pristine rainforest, where iridescent Victoria's Riflebirds display and Red-legged Pademelons graze on the lawns.

We plan to go spotlighting after dark to look for nocturnal mammals and birds but will also have a chance of seeing the shy and elusive Duck-billed Platypus, as it swims out along a favoured stream at dusk. *Two nights Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodge*

**Day 12****CENTENARY LAKES, REDDEN ISLAND, CATTANA WETLANDS & MOSSMAN**

We plan to start our day with a visit to Centenary Lakes which can be highly productive for a range of honeyeaters. We will also hope to find Orange-footed Scrubfowl which can sometimes be seen scratching about for food on the tangled forest floor.

Just north of the city, Redden Island, is a jewel of a reserve comprising mangroves, beaches and eucalypt woodlands. The lovely Rose-crowned Fruit Dove and Little Bronze-cuckoo are possible and we have a good chance of finding the huge but secretive Great-billed Heron.

We also intend to visit Cattana Wetlands, a man-made system of interconnected pools where we may find our first Green Pygmy-geese as well as flocks of Metallic Starlings and Helmeted Friarbirds.

We then head up the coast to our accommodation in Mossman. *Night Mossman*

**Days 13 - 14****DAINTREE RIVER CRUISE AND KINGFISHER PARK, JULATTEN**

We begin with an early morning cruise on the Lower Daintree River which is a wildlife experience not to be missed. Our focus will primarily be on looking for Great-billed Heron, Papuan Frogmouth and Little Kingfisher but we may also see the massive Saltwater or Estuarine Crocodiles which frequent this river.....

After breakfast, we cross the Daintree River and search the forest on the northern side for the elusive and entirely unpredictable Southern Cassowary before heading inland towards our next destination, Kingfisher Park, at Julatten.

Named after the beautiful Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher that breeds in the grounds, Kingfisher Park is a comfortable retreat set within a patch of remnant rainforest. Boasting a remarkable list of birds, the likes of Double-eyed Fig Parrot, Lesser Sooty Owl, Emerald Dove, Pied Monarch and Yellow-breasted Boatbill are among more than two hundred species which have been recorded at or around the lodge.

Accommodation at Kingfisher Park is in comfortable but simply furnished cabins, each with a veranda looking out over the rainforest grounds. We spend two nights at this superb wildlife spot! *Two nights Julatten*

**Days 15 - 17****FLY CAIRNS-BRISBANE, O'REILLY'S RAINFOREST RETREAT**

We depart Cairns around lunch time on a flight to Brisbane. Leaving the heat of Queensland's Gold Coast lowlands behind, we are soon climbing into the cooler upland rainforests of the bird-rich Lamington National Park where we will spend three nights staying at the world famous O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat in the beautiful Green Mountains.

With its fine network of forest trails, O'Reilly's offers excellent opportunities to see a whole range of rainforest specialities including Noisy Pitta, Green Catbird and Australian Logrunner.

This is wonderful bowerbird country, with the stunning black and gold Regent Bowerbird a fitting emblem for the lodge and the dark blue Satin Bowerbird that loves to adorn its bower with bright blue objects. Both species can be ridiculously easy to see at O'Reilly's as they often visit the feeding areas and may even perch on you!

It is almost impossible to avoid getting 'mugged' by hordes of colourful Crimson Rosellas and Australian King Parrots during the day and always make sure you keep any food items firmly under wraps!



Watch the birdie! Australian King Parrot at O'Reilly's © tour participant Bob Martin

Two of the local rainforest specialities are Albert's Lyrebird and Paradise Riflebird and we will hope to find both of these.

At slightly lower elevations, O'Reilly's dry eucalypt forests hold a wealth of new species including the almost surreal Glossy Black Cockatoo and the delightful Whiptail Wallaby.

After dark, we may also get an opportunity to see Sugar Gliders and there are good chances of Red-necked Pademelons.

The "O'Reilly's experience" is simply fabulous and richly deserves its reputation as one of the world's best birdwatching lodges.

After three fabulous nights here, we are confident that you will agree with us that there is no finer place to finish our classic Eastern Australia tour! *Three nights at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat*

**Day 18**

**RETURN TO BRISBANE, FLY TO THE UK**

Following an early breakfast, we bid a reluctant farewell to O'Reilly's Rainforest Lodge and wind our way back down through the Green Mountains to Brisbane.

Bidding a final goodbye to Peter, we begin our journey back to the UK.

**Day 19**

**ARRIVAL IN UK**

Arrival back in the UK, where our birdwatching tour to Eastern Australia concludes.



Great Knot, Queensland © tour participant Bob Martin

## Trip Information

**Group Size** 7 participants and 1 leader

**Birds** 270-310 species

**Mammals** 15-25 species

**Accommodation** We stay at a varied selection of comfortable Aussie hotels, motels, lodges and cabins. All rooms are en suite except for our one night at lovely Glen Davis and two at Kingfisher Park, where all bedrooms are separate but some bathrooms may be shared with another room.

**Meals** All main meals are included in the tour price, commencing with lunch following arrival in Australia on Day 3 and concluding with breakfast there on Day 18. Aussie food is good!

**Walking** Easy walking, no more than a mile or two at any one time. Sturdy thornproof walking shoes or boots with corrugated soles for grip are recommended.

**Weather** November is the ideal time to visit Eastern Australia. The climate is tropical in the north (Cairns to Brisbane), where it is hot and sunny all year round (25-33C/77-91F). It can be humid at times, especially at the coast; typically cooler and more pleasant early and late in the day in the hills, as well as further south with temperatures in Sydney ranging from 16-23C (61-74F). November is one of the driest months of the year but some rain is possible over the coast and hills.

**Ground Transport** By Toyota minibus or similar. Private coach transfers to and from O'Reilly's, where our birding excursions are on foot and/or in O'Reilly's own 'wildlife bus'.

**Boat Trips** Our tour cost includes two 'must-do' boat trips: a dawn wildlife cruise on the Daintree River and an all-day pelagic visit to Michaelmas Cay and the Great Barrier Reef.

**Flights** Due to the pandemic, it is proving extremely difficult to predict future flight prices and schedules, especially when a trip is scheduled for beyond the period when flights can be booked. As a result, we have taken the decision to price our holidays as excluding flights.

To keep the process as simple as possible for our clients, however, we are now working closely with a dedicated agent at Travel Counsellors who will be able to advise you on which flights we are recommending for each holiday and he will be able to book these for you.

**Photos** Some wonderful photographic opportunities on this tour, especially at places such as O'Reilly's Rainforest Lodge.

## Tour Extensions

Should you wish to extend your visit to Australia before and/or after our tour, this is easy to do. Internal flights are nowhere near as expensive as they once were and although Limosa does not offer 'tailormade' arrangements, Limosa Managing Director Chris Collins has spent many months exploring Australia and is happy to share his knowledge with you, so please don't hesitate to call us.

### Tour Cost

#### 2022 (19 days):

Land only cost: £5995

Single supplement: £995

Deposit: £1000

#### Cost includes

- Limosa Tour Leader
- 15 nights accommodation in Australia
- All main meals
- Minibus transport
- Two boat trips: Daintree River cruise and Great Barrier Reef including Michaelmas Cay
- All excursions, local guide fees, permits, entry fees, tour-based tips and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds

#### Cost excludes

Flights, Insurance, Aussie eVisitor visa, drinks, airport meals, snacks & other personal expenses.

### About Your Guide

**Peter Taylor** Peter is 'our man in Australia'. Although originally from Stockport in the UK, Peter spent his teenage years at Adelaide in South Australia and has since birded extensively across this great continent. For more than twenty years he has lived in the tall timber country of Manjimup (south of Perth), in Western Australia which is a hotspot for endemic birds and plants. Having forsaken a comfortable career with the government to follow his true passion for birds and birding, Peter now works full-time as a naturalist and bird and wildlife tour guide.

A naturalised Australian, who emigrated as a child with his parents from the UK to Australia as a '£10 Pom' in the 1960s, he is the perfect guide for *Limosa's* tours "Down Under".

He has led our Western Australia tour since 2009 and guides our other Australia trips.

### What You Say...

*"Peter was the epitome of an excellent leader - well informed, calm, relaxed, friendly and able to deal with any situations... This was my best birding trip in years."*

**FK, Eastern Australia tour**

### How to enquire

Due to the considerable uncertainty created by the pandemic, Limosa Holidays are not currently accepting bookings for any trips, however, you are welcome to contact us either by email or phone to register your interest in any of our holidays.

Whilst some tour companies may be willing to take a deposit from you and say a trip is a “confirmed departure”, our approach is going to be to wait a little longer as we consider this both honest and realistic.

Once we are confident that the trip can run, we will be in touch to confirm your place and ask for a deposit.

We do encourage you to register your interest as we are expecting considerable demand, once the consensus is that it is safe to travel again.

### Any Questions

Please do not hesitate to contact us by email or phone. Our office is generally open from 09:30-17:30 but you are welcome to contact us outside these times too. We are happy to take calls in the evening and at weekends but if no one is available the call will go to our answerphone.

***Thank you for your interest in our tours. We do hope that you will be able to join us once the pandemic is over and we look forward to hearing from you***

