



TOUR INFORMATION FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Western and Northern Territories

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING AUSTRALIA: United Kingdom citizens will need a valid passport, an onward or return air ticket, and have registered as an **e-Visitor** with the Australian Department of Immigration, in order to enter Australia. An e-Visitor is valid for a year and is designed for people who live outside Australia and want to visit Australia for tourism for up to 3 months.

The Australian e-Visitor service is free of charge when you apply using the official site of the Australian Department of Immigration at <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/evisitor-651>. If you don't have access to the internet please call the Australian High Commission in London for advice (tel: 020 7379 4334), or Trailfinders Visa Service (tel: 020 7084 6506). Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Australian Embassy to obtain entry requirements.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: There will be an introductory meeting in the hotel lobby at 18.00 on Day 1 of the tour. This informal meeting gives the leader the chance to expound on the trip - pace of the tour, daily routine, the next day's schedule, etc., and gives the participants an opportunity to introduce themselves to one another. After the meeting, we'll head to dinner at our hotel. We encourage you to arrange your flights so that you can be present at the introductory meeting. If you elect to arrive late in the evening of Day 1, please be aware that the birding day will start early on Day 2 and you may only get a few hours' sleep. If you can't arrive before early evening, you may want to consider arriving a day early. Due to the dramatic shift in time zones we recommend coming in a day or even two early to enjoy the beautiful city of Perth and adjust to the new time zone.

CURRENCY: The currency is the Australian dollar. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature such as laundry, extra drinks, postcards, souvenirs, etc. ATMs (automatic cash dispensing machines) are the easiest and cheapest way of obtaining cash. Payment by credit card is widely accepted in Australia, with Visa and Mastercard being preferred over American Express. Note that many vendors in Australia may not accept credit cards lacking a chip and pin. We suggest that participants bring about \$100 Australian with them in cash to save having to obtain money immediately on arrival.

Note: Traveler's checks are not recommended as they are increasingly difficult to cash.

CLIMATE: This tour spans a wide array of habitats and climactic conditions. Temperatures could range from 10C (50F) and possible wind and rain while on the Southwestern coast, and up to 37C (98F) (rarely even a bit higher) and strong sun in Kununurra. Most of the tour will involve daily highs around 22-28C (72-82F) degrees, and lows in the 12-18C (53-65F) range.

ALTITUDE: We do not ascend to any appreciable elevation while on this tour, with perhaps our highest point being about 1000 feet above sea level.

AUSTRALIA – Western and Northern Territories: Tour Information...2

PACE OF TOUR: Walks will be on level ground over generally very even terrain and of a mile and a half or less in duration. Some optional walks out into habitat (i.e. off trail) will be offered while we are in the interior of the continent, and these may involve walking around brush or through some scratchy vegetation. A few of the trails, especially around Alice Springs may involve walking over some rocky terrain or through/around hostile vegetation. Note too that although each walk we take during the day will be short, we may cover 5-6 miles of walking over the course of a day.

Many days will be broken up into optional sections, with pre-breakfast excursions, morning/afternoon trips, and, on some nights, after dinner spotlighting for nocturnal mammals and birds. In some areas we make some long drives, so come prepared to spend a little more time than usual in the vehicles. Australia is a big country!

Whenever possible we'll return to the hotel in the late afternoon/early evening and we'll almost always have a break of an hour to shower and relax before dinner.

If you are doing more than one section of this tour it will be a long trip, so it is important to pace yourself appropriately.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. It is further recommended that most travellers have protection against Hepatitis A.

Although drinking water is safe throughout Australia, any inter-continental travel can cause minor intestinal upsets and we advise bringing appropriate medicine, such as Imodium, just in case.

Bring a strong insect repellent for protection against mosquitoes, sand-flies and leeches which we may encounter at times. In general we do not encounter high concentrations of biting insects during the tour however flies can be a real nuisance at times in some yea.. Insect repellent will provide adequate protection. Many brands use diethyltoluamide (DEET) which, while providing the best protection, can be corrosive and therefore require care when using. There are many 'natural' and less-harmful repellents available from various camping supply stores.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: Our hotels will vary from fairly basic in out of the way small country towns, to international airport hotels in Perth and Darwin. Almost all Australian hotels provide in-room refrigerators, tea and coffee making facilities and hair dryers. In a couple of places accommodation is limited and we stay in cottages that contain two private bedrooms and one shared bathroom (per cottage). If necessary, we try to put two people in one of the bedrooms and one in the other, so that there are only three people sharing a bathroom.

LAUNDRY: Laundry service is available at our hotel in Alice Springs and Perth, which is near the tour's midpoint and can be done in Darwin as well. Otherwise, as we move hotels regularly, laundry service can be tricky.

AUSTRALIA – Western and Northern Territories: Tour Information...3

ELECTRICITY: 240V AC. Australian sockets take a two or three flat-pin plug. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: We'll normally have breakfast in our hotel. Often this will consist of cereal, fruit, juice, coffee and toast brought to our rooms. On some days we will have a picnic lunch while on others we'll stop at a small cafe or take-away for sandwiches and a drink. Dinners are generally at or near our accommodation and are reminiscent of standard restaurant fare with excellent seafood dishes on the coast. Exotic ingredients like Emu and Kangaroo are occasionally available. In general meals are plentiful, hearty, and varied.

Our tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee that all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all the special requests within a group. Participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs cannot, regrettably, be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time however announced meal times are always approximate depending on how the day unfolds. Sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay. All other drinks or 'personal' drinking water for use in your room are the responsibility of the individual.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: WIFI is surprisingly not widely available in Australia, and when it is available, it tends to be slow, or very expensive. This is improving every year, but do not count on daily WIFI service throughout the tour. Currently the hotels in Perth, Alice, and Darwin all offer free and good WIFI, although not necessarily in-room.

Mobile phones can be useful while on tour but keep in mind that many countries operate on a different cellular technology. Your phone may be incompatible with the local system, so please check with your local carrier. Fortunately, with the advent of smartphones, it is easy to download applications such as Skype or Google Voice, which can make calling home free or very inexpensive. Another option is to replace the data ("SIM") card in your phone in-country. The SIM cards, including data can be very cheap. If you wish to use this option you will need to check that your smart phone has a SIM card slot.

CLOTHING: Neat informal dress is accepted in most places. Flip-flops are not acceptable as footwear in some restaurants, though leather sandals are accepted. Shorts are commonly worn throughout Australia, even as formal dress, when they are usually worn with knee-length socks.

The following items are basic requirements:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Sturdy, comfortable footwear | Lightweight shirts |
| Water-proof/wind-proof jacket | Warm sweater |
| Tough cotton trousers | Light shoes for evenings |
| Broad-rimmed sun hat | Sun glasses |
| Woolly-hat & gloves (warm but thin) | Shorts |
| Folding umbrella (very useful in sudden downpours) | |

AUSTRALIA – Western and Northern Territories: Tour Information...4

Note: Our mornings in southwest Western Australia may be cold (10°C), so warm waterproof clothing is essential. And once up in the tropical north we may experience temperatures in the mid to even upper 30's C – see CLIMATE.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: Please bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack or shoulder bag	Sun cream
Torch (and extra batteries)	Insect repellent
Water bottle	Earplugs (if a light sleeper)
Luggage locks	Electrical adaptor
Basic First-Aid kit	Pocket knife (packed in checked-in bags)
Personal medication	

Optional: Telescope and tripod (recommended if you have them), spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear (for hotel pools).

Note: The leader will carry a spotting telescope for group use. Should you choose to bring your own you will be required to carry and maintain it for the duration of the tour. If you use a telescope regularly in your day-to-day birding, consider bringing it on tour. As much of the Australian landscape is open, with sweeping vistas, telescopes are of more use here than in the heavily forested environments of many other tour destinations. They are an advantage and very useful on this tour.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leaders will provide the following:

Telescope and tripod	Small first-aid kit
Reference books and maps	Tape recording/playback equipment
Spotlight	Laser pointer

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

The allowance for checked luggage on the internal flights is ONE bag weighing no more than 50lbs (23 kg). For carry-on luggage the current limits (as of 2019) are one piece of luggage up to 10 kg or two pieces up to 14 kg total for the Qantas flights. Our flight to and from Kununurra is on Air North, whose baggage allowances (as of 2019) are ONE bag weighing no more than 20 kg checked and a carry on of up to 9 kg.

We recommend bringing a small soft-sided foldable bag (like a duffel) which can be used to store extra gear at our Darwin Hotel while we are away in Kununurra if you suspect that you are over the Air North limits. Your carry-on bag must fit inside metal frames of this size which stand by the check-in desk and the departure gate. Come prepared to pack larger items in your main luggage if you are used to a large carry-on bag.

Note: There is no prohibition on checking in locked luggage for flights in Australia so please bring luggage locks on the tour and use them for all internal flights.

AUSTRALIA – Western and Northern Territories: Tour Information...5

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Although there will be occasions when bird photography is possible, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim. Bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need during the tour. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution. "Digiscoping" is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope is not available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: Transportation on most of the tour will be in a minibus driven by the leader. All participants must be willing to take their turn in the back seat and a daily rotation of seating positions will be encouraged. During some portions of the tour a local Australian co-leader will accompany the group and will take the front passenger seat. In the Northern Territory we may have to use two smaller vehicles with radio communication to comply with local requirements.

For our internal flights (Perth-Alice Springs, Alice Springs-Darwin, Darwin-Kununurra-Darwin) we use Australian based airlines and book a group reservation. Some international airlines have code-share agreements with these local airlines, so it is worth bringing your frequent flier information and presenting it when we check in for the flights.

SMOKING: Smoking and vaping is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists, etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group. Smoking is no longer allowed inside public buildings in Australia and this includes all bars, restaurants and hotel rooms.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

AUSTRALIA – Western and Northern Territories: Tour Information...6

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Birds:

Christidis, L. and W. E. Boles. *Systematics and Taxonomy of Australia Birds*. 2008. CSIRO, Publishing, Collingwood. A slightly out of date book on the taxonomy of the birds of Australia, containing fascinating background to many lumps and splits. This is not a field guide and contains no illustration, but for those interested in taxonomy (both within Australia and worldwide it is well worth reading). ISBN-13: 978-0643096028

Menkhorst, P., D Rogers; R Clarke, J Davies, P Marsack and K Franklin. *The Australian Bird Guide*. This is the newest and most comprehensive guide, but is quite weighty and not really a practical book for use in the field. ISBN: 9780691173016.

Dolby, T., and R Clarke. 2014. *Finding Australian Birds: A Field Guide to Birding Locations*. CSIRO Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-0643097667

Pizzey, G and F Knight. *The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. 9th Edition 2012. HarperCollins, London. Probably the best Australian Field guide and a vast improvement on its earlier 1980 edition. ISBN: 9780732291938 **Recommended.**

Simpson, K, and N Day. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. 8th Edition. 2010. Christopher Helm, London. A good field guide with excellent plates, though a little bulkier than the Slater guide. ISBN: 9780670072316 **Recommended.**

Slater, P.& P and R Slater. *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*. 2nd Edition. 2009. Another Australian field guide, certainly the most practical as it fits in most pockets. ISBN: 9781877069635 **Recommended.**

Note: A word about the three preceding books – any of these will suffice for the tour, and each has its own advantages and disadvantages:

Pizzey – best range maps, large illustrations with the most forms pictured. Bulky

Simpson – best illustrations, bulky, not quite as comprehensive as Pizzey.

Slater – most portable, slightly out of date taxonomically, not as comprehensive or as thoroughly illustrated.

Other wildlife:

Braby, Michael F. *The Complete Field Guide to Butterflies of Australia*. 2004. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne. ISBN 13: [9780643090279](https://www.csiro.au/ISBN/9780643090279). An excellent new field guide to Australia's butterflies with full color plates opposite text and maps. **Recommended**

Brown, Andrew and Kingsley Dixon. *Field Guide to the Orchids of Western Australia*. 2013. Simon Neville Publishing. ISBN: 9780980348149

Cogger, Harold G. *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*. 2000. 6th edition. Reed New Holland, Sydney/Cornell University Press, New York. ISBN 187633433-9. A superb and comprehensive guide but too bulky for field use.

Cronin, Leonard. *Cronin's Key Guide to Australian Wildflowers*. 2008. Allen and Unwin. ISBN: 9781741751116

Holliday, Ivan. *A Field Guide to Australian Trees*. 3rd edition 2002. New Holland Publishers. ISBN 9781876334796.

AUSTRALIA – Western and Northern Territories: Tour Information...7

Menkhorst, Peter and Frank Knight. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia*. 3rd Edition. 2011. Oxford University Press, Melbourne. ISBN 13: 9780195573954. A superb field guide and the **recommended** mammal guide for the tour.

Other: I have to mention the following for general culture reference of Australia:

Bryson, Bill. *In a Sunburnt Country*. 2000.

Davidson, Graeme. *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*. 2001.

Gunn, Jeannie. *We of the Never Never*. Many editions.

Keneally, Thomas. *A Commonwealth of Thieves: The Improbable Birth of Australia*. 2006

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc, and your international air tickets for the tour will be sent to you about three weeks before departure. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.