



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Melanesia

### Discover the Secrets

*24<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022 (17 days)*



Claret-breasted Fruit Doves by Jonathan Rossouw

*Sail into a world few ever experience; idyllic islands and isolated villages where unique time-honoured traditions and elaborately costumed dancers welcome us into their world as we uncover the hidden gems of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. From the culturally rich arterial of the Sepik River we sail across the Bismarck Sea exploring remote shores and villages still living traditional lifestyles, and delve into the history, culture and wildlife of New Ireland and New Britain.*

*Crossing the Buka Channel at Nissan Island we see reminders of intensive World War II action, then enter a long-isolated world as we are among the first travellers to return to Bougainville in more than two decades. Sailing through the turquoise waters of the Solomon Islands, new vistas and unexpected encounters await. Discover one of the conservation jewels of the South Pacific on Tetepare Island, while*

villagers on culturally-rich Malaita Island still make and use traditional Malaitan shell-money as a dowry and wear it as a status symbol. Experience a kaleidoscope of cultures as we explore Vanuatu, where more than 100 indigenous languages are spoken. With over 80 habitable islands, islanders have closely guarded their own cultures and languages. Our expedition embraces some of these cultures and languages, as we explore one of the happiest places on the planet. Throughout Melanesia there are spectacular reefs, which are home to masses of fish and coral gardens of every colour. These waters offer some of the greatest marine diversity and snorkelling in the world and everybody will have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty beneath the waves.

Whether you are snorkelling or swimming, this ocean aquarium is waiting to be explored and discovered. For birders, this itinerary offers once-in-a-lifetime species on remote, hard to reach islands. The birding potential is exceptional; highlights may include the Superb Pitta and, endemic to the Solomon Islands the Roviana Rail, Solomon Sea Eagle and Vanuatu's Vanikoro White-eye.

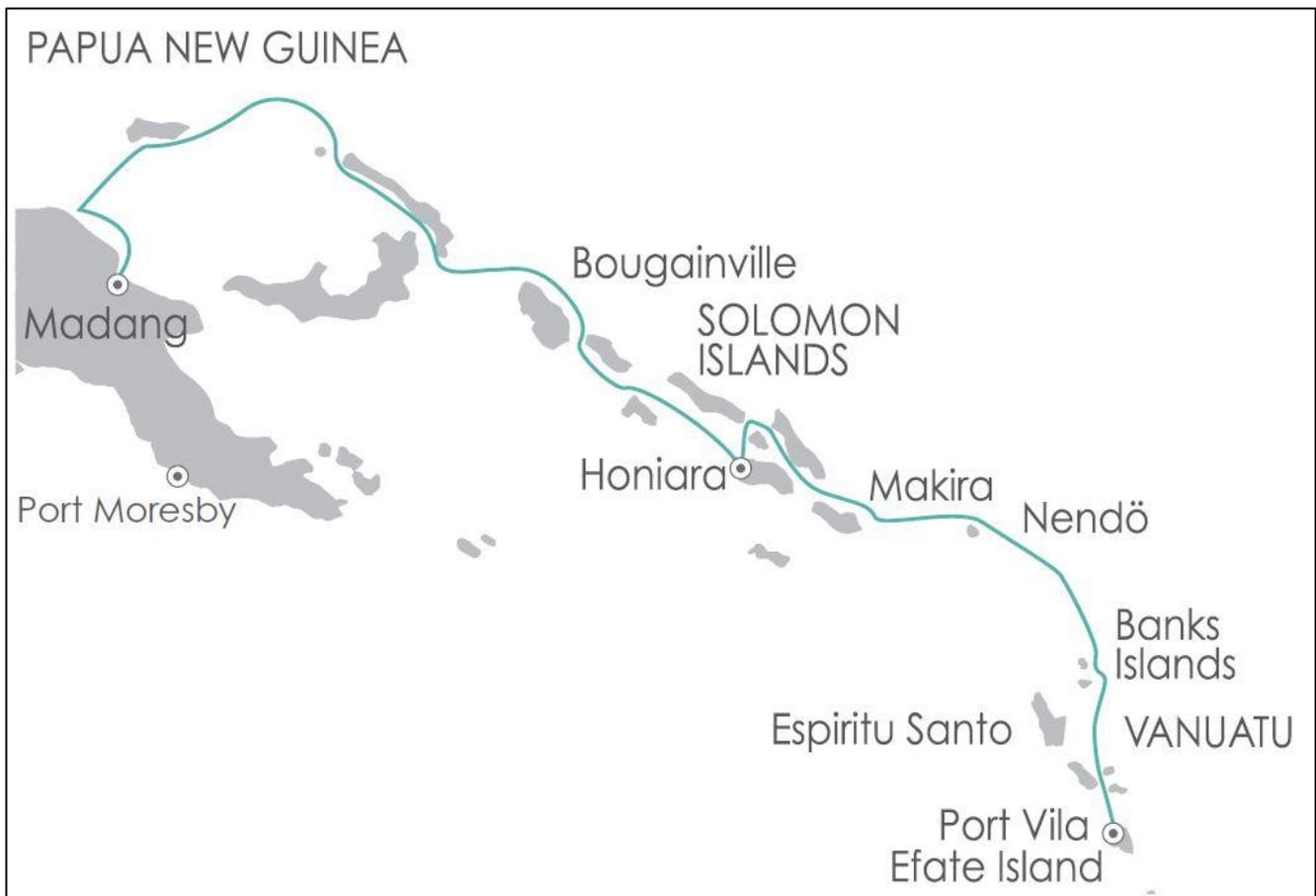
### THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

#### THE ITINERARY

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Arrival in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea</b>
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Madang</b>
<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Sepik River</b>
<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Manus Island</b>
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>New Hanover Island</b>
<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Rabaul &amp; Kokopo, New Britain</b>
<b>Day 7</b>	<b>Nissan Island</b>
<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Bougainville Island</b>
<b>Day 9</b>	<b>New Georgia Islands</b>
<b>Day 10</b>	<b>Tetepare Island</b>
<b>Day 11</b>	<b>Malaita</b>
<b>Day 12</b>	<b>Makira</b>
<b>Day 13</b>	<b>Nendö – Temotu Province</b>
<b>Day 14</b>	<b>Vanikoro</b>
<b>Day 15</b>	<b>Espiritu Santo</b>
<b>Day 16</b>	<b>Ambrym</b>
<b>Day 17</b>	<b>Port Vila, Vanuatu</b>



**TOUR ROUTE MAP....**



## THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

**Day 1: Arrive in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.** Arrive in Papua New Guinea's sprawling capital Port Moresby and transfer to your hotel where our group will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening meet with your fellow travellers and the expedition team over dinner at the resort.

**Day 2: Madang.** Madang is picturesquely situated on a peninsula surrounded by islands and pristine waterways. During our first birding excursion of the trip, we will sample some of the lush lowland rainforest that exists around Madang. This beautiful forest has an amazing array of wildlife, most of which is shy and difficult to spot since the rainforests of New Guinea do not give up their secrets easily. Nonetheless, persistence will hopefully pay off with some excellent bird encounters, including possibilities to see two of the more spectacular birds-of-paradise for which Papua New Guinea is justifiably so famous – the King Bird-of-paradise and the rather poorly named Lesser Bird-of-paradise. In addition, well over one hundred other bird species inhabit these forests, so we are certain to have some other interesting sightings!



**King Bird-of-paradise by Nancy Bell**

This afternoon we will then all board the Spirit of Enderby, our home for next 12 nights; and after settling into our cabins, we will join the Captain and expedition team on the Bridge as we set sail on our voyage into the Bismarck Sea.

**Day 3: Sepik River.** Sure to be one of the highlights of our expedition, we have a full day to fully appreciate this remarkable river, along with the birds, animals and people that call it home. We intend to explore the river by zodiac, where we will follow some of the tributaries and channels in search of the local birds and wildlife. Amongst the area's extraordinary diversity of doves and pigeons, which include up to 8 species of gorgeous fruit doves and 5 species of imperial pigeon, we hope to find the mythical Victoria Crowned Pigeon that still persists along quiet tributaries despite heavy hunting pressure. Parrots are another well-represented group and in particular, we hope to see the very localised Edwards's Fig Parrot, along with more widespread yet spectacular species such as Palm Cockatoo and Vulturine Parrot. Other birds we could encounter from the zodiacs include Long-tailed Honey Buzzard, Blyth's Hornbill, Channel-billed Cuckoo and Yellow-faced Myna.



**Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise by Lee Hunter**



Inside the seasonally flooded forests alongside the river lurk the notoriously shy skulkers of the New Guinea lowlands, including Hook-billed Kingfisher and the beautiful Red-bellied Pitta. In addition, frantic feeding flocks of cuckooshrikes, honeyeaters, gerygones, monarchs and scrubwrens can sometimes contain a dozen or more species! While the birds-of-paradise are primarily found in the highlands, two of the family's most stunning members occur along the river – King and Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise – and if we are very fortunate, we may be able to find these magnificent birds displaying high up in the trees or feeding at a fruiting tree.



Superb Pitta by Adam Riley

**Day 4: Manus Island.** Seldom visited and little known, Manus Island is considered a jewel in the crown of Papua New Guinea. Biologically isolated, the island is home to several endemic species. Manus province also has the lowest population density in all New Guinea, with its people still living a very traditional lifestyle uncorrupted by Western influence. During our birding excursions here, we hope to see the island's most celebrated endemic – the very elusive Superb Pitta. Easier to find are Manus Friarbird, Manus Monarch, and Manus Cuckooshrike. The island is also a good place to see Meek's Pygmy Parrot, Bismarck White-eye, the striking Claret-breasted Fruit Dove and Nicobar Pigeon. There is also a slim chance of finding the impressive Manus Boobook.



Blue-eyed Cockatoos  
by Jonathan Rossouw

**Day 5: New Hanover Island.** Traditionally known as Lavongai Island, volcanic New Hanover is a wild, rugged and untouched paradise complete with a dense rainforest, waterfalls and exceptional beaches fringed by reefs and smaller satellite islands. Sparsely populated, the villages here enjoy a subsistent, traditional lifestyle. Exceptional snorkelling is a given here with much to experience below the surface, while Three Island Harbour, on the north-west tip of the island, features four Japanese WWII wrecks which were sunk by Allied bombers in 1944.

**Day 6: Rabaul & Kokopo, New Britain.** Although being rapidly converted into a giant palm oil plantation, the remnant forest pockets of New Britain are nevertheless full of endemics and some of the species we hope to encounter today include Finsch's and Yellowish Imperial Pigeons, Blue-eyed Cockatoo, White-necked and Violaceous Coucals, New Britain Friarbird, Ashy and Black-bellied Myzomelas, Bismarck Crow and Red-banded Flowerpecker. The beautiful Black-capped Paradise Kingfisher is fairly common but very difficult to see; while with luck, we will find one of the scarcer New Britain



endemics such as Black Honey Buzzard or White-mantled Kingfisher.

The area around New Britain and across to Bougainville is well-known amongst seabirders as the feeding grounds of the legendary Beck's Petrel, a recently rediscovered species. This area is also seemingly a stronghold for the mysterious Heinroth's Shearwater, whose breeding grounds are yet to be discovered. Many other exciting seabird possibilities exist in this area, which hosts one of the largest concentrations of cetaceans anywhere in the world.



Zodiac island cruise by Heritage Expeditions

**Day 7: Nissan Island.** A tropical atoll adrift in the azure waters of the Buka Channel, Nissan Island is bathed in rich tropical currents and its waters consequently abound in marine life. Seldom has anybody had the opportunity to discover this underwater world, which promises abundant fish life and pristine coral reefs.

Ashore there are still reminders of the brief but intensive World War II activities, which saw the island recaptured by Kiwi and British forces from the Japanese occupiers. During our time here, we will meet with the friendly locals and search the dense woods and other habitats for some of the elusive birds that occur here. Possibilities include Nicobar Pigeon, Bronze (Beccari's) Ground Dove, Superb and Yellow-bibbed Fruit Doves, Island and Pacific Imperial Pigeons, Coconut Lorikeet, Island Monarch, both Australian and Mangrove Golden Whistlers, and Louisiade White-eye.

There will also be opportunities later in the day to snorkel over the coral reefs and immerse ourselves once again in yet another hidden world under the ocean surface.



Nicobar Pigeon by Dennis Braddy

**Day 8: Bougainville Island.** We plan to be amongst the first expeditioners to re-discover the treasures of Bougainville, long isolated and in a strange way, therefore protected by the civil war conflict that swirled around its shores, and which finally ended with the peace negotiations in 1998. Today it is emerging once again as a newly vibrant and remarkably pristine island paradise, home to some of the greatest biodiversity in the region, both above and below the waters.

Although politically part of Papua New Guinea, Bougainville is biologically part of the Solomons and we will, therefore, have our first encounter with many of the Solomons' bird species. Some of the birds we hope to see today include



Sanford's Sea Eagle, the elusive Crested Cuckoo-Dove, Solomons Cockatoo, Ultramarine Kingfisher, Solomons Cuckooshrike, Cockerell's (White-winged) Fantail, Solomons Monarch, Steel-blue Flycatcher, Red-capped Myzomela, Yellow-throated White-eye, Brown-winged Starling and Midget Flowerpecker. In particular, we will be looking for the endemic Bougainville Crow and the secretive Woodford's Rail.



Eclectus Parrot pair by Markus Lilje

**Day 9: New Georgia Island.** The volcanic New Georgia Islands are found in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands and are characterised by extensive reefs and lagoons, rugged terrain and an abundance of rivers.

Nature enthusiasts will relish landing on Kolombangara Island, where we plan to visit the Imbu Rano Lodge and Conservation Area which protects the island's central peak and search for the rare Roviana Rail along with other endemic bird species. Snorkel the wreck of a US NAVY FAF Grumman Wildcat (carrier version) WWII plane off a tiny island where the surrounding reefs are home to some of the highest fish counts in the world. Stock up on the local currency to purchase the wood or stone carvings that the people of the Western Province are so famous for.

**Day 10: Tetepare Island.** Uninhabited for 150 years, this rugged island cloaked in rainforest and fringed with coral reefs is home to one of the Solomon Islands' leading community driven conservation projects Tetepare Descendants' Association. Receiving international recognition for its conservation and archaeological significance. Three species of turtle, including the endangered leatherback, nest on its beaches while other species inhabiting the island and surrounding waters include Dugong, the world's largest skink, endemic Tetepare White-eye and many more.

**Day 11: Malaita.** Mountainous Malaita is home to one-third of the Solomon's total population, with pristine rivers and unexploited tropical forests. Anchoring in one of the harbours on the western side of the island, we'll spend the day ashore, including a visit to Langa Langa Lagoon, famous for its artificial islands. For birders, an excursion into the hills of Malaita provides good chances for finding some of Malaita's special birds, including the endemic Malaita White-eye and possibly the rare Red-vested (Red-bellied) Myzomela. Other possibilities include Cardinal Lory, Moustached Treeswift and Steel-blue Flycatcher; while additional species such as Cockerell's (or White-winged) Fantail and Brown-winged Starling have distinctive subspecies on Malaita, which may soon be split as full species.



Makira islanders by Heritage Expeditions



**Day 12: Makira.** Makira is the most easterly of the main islands in the Solomon archipelago, and covers some 3,100 square kilometres with a mountain range running right through the centre of the island. Not far to the east lies Santa Ana, a small raised coral atoll. Sea caves on the island are believed to be the first site of human habitation in the Solomons, dating back to 1280 BC.

This morning we anchor in the calm waters of Star Harbour. Here the option exists to join our naturalists for a Zodiac exploration of the abundant mangrove forests that line the shores and to take a short walk to Makira's south coast where the villagers live much as they have for millennia. Here

we will spend time with the locals, who share with us their traditional song and dance. If we are lucky, the local boys might be surfing on their hand carved palm wood boards! In addition, this beautiful island has more than its fair share of endemics, and some of the lowland species we hope to see include the beautiful White-headed Fruit Dove, Makira Honeyeater, Sooty Myzomela, Makira Cicadabird, the shy White-collared Monarch, Makira Flycatcher, Makira Starling and Mottled Flowerpecker. Many other more widespread birds also occur; while Makira seems to be the best place to see the very rare Chestnut-bellied Imperial Pigeon.



**Red-tailed Tropicbird by James Wakelin**



**Magnificent (Collared) Petrel by Jonathan Rossouw**

**Day 13: Nendö – Temotu Province.** Nendö is the largest of the Santa Cruz Islands, which lie to the south-east of the Solomon Islands. Biologically, these islands share more in common with Vanuatu than the Solomons. Interestingly, the island is the home of red feather money, which is sourced from the Scarlet Myzomela (Honeyeater).

We will spend the afternoon birding Nendö for three birds endemic to the islands: namely Santa Cruz White-eye, the bizarre looking Sanford's White-eye and Santa Cruz Shrikebill, though the latter is very rare and we will require a hefty dose of luck to see this special bird! In addition, we also have a chance for Rusty-winged Starling here.

**Day 14: Vanikoro.** Today we explore the archipelago of Vanikoro, with its five islands encapsulated by a dramatic barrier reef that offers superb diving and snorkelling opportunities. We will also visit a monument to Jean-François de La Pérouse, a French explorer who was stranded here after both his vessels struck this very reef in 1788. Some 900 people inhabit Vanikoro, with approximately 600 Melanesian islanders



and 300 Polynesians, all of whom originate from nearby Tikopia. Our visit here offers the chance to wander through the island's forests in search of the two endemic bird species that reside here, namely Vanikoro Monarch and Vanikoro White-eye, the latter species described only as recently as 2008. Very few birders have had the opportunity to explore this remote island so it is something of an expeditionary day! We will also take the time to float through the pristine, crystal clear waters in search of the spectacular marine life that abounds here.



Island zodiac cruise by Heritage Expeditions

**Day 15: Espiritu Santo.** Today we will take full advantage of our day ashore to make the most of Vanuatu's largest Island, Espiritu Santo; location of James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific". The island is also home to all of Vanuatu's endemic birds, including the Mountain Starling, a species restricted entirely to Santo. Two protected areas have been established to safeguard the island's biodiversity, these being the Loru Conservation Area on the east coast and the Vatthe Conservation area in the north. We will be spending the day birding in the lowland forest of one of these reserves, where we should see a good selection of Vanuatu's endemic birds, including Tanna Fruit Dove, Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher, Buff-bellied Monarch and, hopefully, the mound-building Vanuatu Megapode, along with a good range of more widespread species.

For divers, the wreck of SS President Coolidge, a military transport vessel which hit a mine in World War II and which rests at a depth of between 20 and 60 metres, provides numerous technical dive options, including swimming through the ship's corridors and stairwells for those with a sense of adventure. Other opportunities include paddling upriver in a dug-out canoe to swim in the breath-taking Blue Hole, a snorkel at Million Dollar Point (where the Americans dumped their equipment after the war), and a visit to Luganville Township to interact with the locals and sample their relaxed and traditional way of life.



Cardinal Myzomela by Adam Riley

**Day 16: Ambrym.** Today we will make an inaugural visit to Ambrym, renowned as the island of volcanoes and magic throughout Vanuatu. We plan to head ashore at Ranon on the northern coast where the traditional Rom dance is still practised and custom carving is alive and well. A short walk through the forest brings us to the 'arena' where masked dancers emerge from the forest. The forests here offer some excellent walks to go in search of the local birds and plants, accompanied by our naturalists. Possible species to keep our eyes peeled for include Tanna and Red-bellied Fruit Doves, Pacific Emerald Dove, Shining Bronze Cuckoo, Collared Kingfisher, Palm Lorikeet, Cardinal Myzomela (Honeyeater), Polynesian Triller,



White-breasted Woodswallow, Streaked and Grey Fantails, Buff-bellied Monarch, Southern Shrikebill, Pacific Robin, Vanuatu (Yellow-fronted) White-eye and both Blue-faced and Red-headed Parrotfinches. This afternoon we will enjoy a final snorkel excursion.

**Day 17: Port Vila, Vanuatu.** Early this morning we disembark in Port Vila, Vanuatu's capital, on the island of Efate. Upon disembarking, you will be transferred to your central hotel or the airport, where this remarkable island voyage will conclude.

**Please note:** To allow time for disembarkation procedures, we do not recommend booking flights from Port Vila before **midday**.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

Tour dates, cabin prices, single supplement rates, relevant flight costs and spaces available for this cruise are displayed on our website. Please note that cabins have variable prices depending on type and size. Please see under IMPORTANT INFORMATION below.

You are welcome to contact the Rockjumper office for further information and specifics on the cabins variations and booking conditions for this tour.

Please note: The cruise costs are subject to major foreign exchange fluctuations and unforeseen increases in tour related costs (especially the price of fuel) and may have to be adjusted as a result. You will be notified by email if fuel surcharges or other price adjustments need to be implemented. Furthermore, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary due to unforeseen circumstances, but please be aware that we will attempt to stick as close to the original program as possible.

**This includes:**

- Airport transfers at the beginning and end of your voyage;
- One night's pre-cruise hotel accommodation in a twin share room (including dinner and breakfast);
- All meals and 24-hour tea and coffee station aboard the ship;
- Use of snorkel equipment where available;
- All shore excursions and activities throughout, excluding optional specialised birding and diving programmes;
- Lectures by noted naturalists;
- All onshore tips, service taxes and port charges; and
- Comprehensive pre-departure material.

**But excludes:**

- **ANY** flights;
- Passport, visa and immigration fees;
- Travel insurance;
- Optional specialised birding and diving programmes (see below);
- Any Drinks;
- Laundry;
- Special gratuities; and
- Other items of a personal nature (including email).



**Additional charges:**

- Obligatory Discovery Fund: **US\$ 600** per person;
- Birding Supplement
- Kayaking Supplement

**Kayaking:**

On this voyage, we offer a unique kayaking experience. There is no better way to fit in with the locals, often paddling in their own dugouts, and to experience the stunning coral reefs. These self-propelled crafts allow you to enjoy exploratory excursions through a tropical paradise, interact with the locals and discover at your own pace, sometimes beyond the reach of our Zodiacs.

**ABOUT THE DISCOVERY FUND:** Each area we visit has rich cultural experiences and wild treasures to offer, and, as guests, we have made a point to source and support local projects in the areas through which we travel. A contribution from each passenger, therefore, represents a portion of the money we donate to ensure the longevity and success of educational, environmental and cultural initiatives in these regions.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we now quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour).**
- b) Please also note that a Rockjumper leader may not accompany the expedition unless a minimum of 10 participants are signed up through Rockjumper. In the case that a Rockjumper leader is not on board, the professional expedition staff will take care of all participants signed up through Rockjumper.**
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs (especially fuel) and may have to be adjusted as a result. You will be notified by email if fuel surcharges or other price adjustments need to be implemented.**
- d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

**Please note:**

- Circumstances may be encountered during our voyage which will make it necessary or desirable to deviate from this itinerary. These circumstances include poor weather conditions and opportunities for making unplanned zodiac excursions. Your Expedition Leader will provide more information at the start of the voyage and keep you fully informed during the voyage.
- This tour offers varied activities and excursions; your interest will determine which of these you wish to partake in.
- Some activities and excursions will run at similar times and it will therefore not be possible to participate in both; no refund of excursions and missed landings will be available due to this.

**Arrival and departure details:**

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will commence on day 1 at **Port Moresby**



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**International Airport, Port Moresby** in Papua New Guinea. The cruise will conclude on the morning of day 17 at Port Vila, on the island of Efate, Vanuatu. (**Please note:** To allow time for disembarkation procedures, we do not recommend booking flights from Port Vila before **midday**.)

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

**Flights:**

Port Moresby International Airport (IATA: POM), Papua New Guinea is the main port of entry for this tour. Bauerfield International Airport, Port Vila (IATA: VLI) is the main port of exit for international flights out of Vanuatu and is serviced by Pacific Blue, Air Pacific, Solomon Airlines, Air Vanuatu, Air New Zealand and Qantas. We have the capacity to advise you on the best route according to your preferences, but your local travel agent will best be able to book these flights for you. **IMPORTANT: please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

