

Australia: BT3 Bucket List Rendezvous Itinerary

September 16 – October 1, 2021

Day 1: Arrival in Cairns

Thursday, September 16 (Queensland)

Today, we will meet up at Cairns Airport. Please try to arrive before 10 a.m. Cairns is a tropical paradise and gateway to some of the best birding sites in Australia. We will bird for a couple of hours at Cairns Botanic Gardens and Centenary Lakes. The botanic gardens are magnificent, filled with a spectacular array of bird species in a variety of habitats. Along the narrow creeks, we may find the elusive little kingfisher as it darts out of overhanging branches to snatch small fish. At Centenary Lakes, we'll have the chance to see the odd-looking magpie goose, green pygmy goose, plumed whistling duck, and rajah shelduck. The mangrove section provides an opportunity for striated heron while the overhanging eucalypts could provide a day roost for Papuan frogmouth. We will time our visit to the Esplanade at low tide for the opportunity of a plethora of shorebirds such as curlew sandpiper, red-necked stint, Terek sandpiper, Far Eastern curlew, grey-tailed tattler, and whimbrel. Flying overhead may be great crested tern and gull-billed tern. In the nearby mangroves, we will have a chance at mangrove robin and varied honeyeater. The massive fig trees here are frequented by double-eyed fig-parrots as well.

Overnight at Harbour Lights Cairns

Meals included: Lunch and Dinner

Day 2: Great Barrier Reef

Friday, September 17 (Queensland)

Today we will visit the Great Barrier Reef for snorkeling and birding. Snorkeling was one of Bill's favorite activities so we had to make it a part of the trip! We will head out with Seastar Cruises and visit Michaelmas Cay first. It is not only a great site for snorkeling and diving, but the Cay itself is a haven for birds. We will be ferried across, from the main boat to the sandy cay, which is a significant nesting site. Most commonly the breeding species observed are sooty terns, lesser crested terns, and common noddies. A full list of the possible birds is on the [Seastar's website](#). Snorkeling is a must in order to see the extraordinary marine life of the Great Barrier Reef, with the chance of a green sea turtle! We return to shore around 4 p.m. with time to recover from an exciting day on the ocean before dinner and discussion on the best bird/marine creatures of the day in Mossman!

Overnight at Mossman Motel and Holiday Villas

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 3: Mount Lewis – Mount Molloy

Saturday, September 18 (Queensland)

With an early start, we will head up to Mount Lewis to seek out some of the wet tropic species that prefer a higher altitude. Mount Lewis is part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage sites and is a "hotspot" for animal diversity and endemism. Here we will be seeking out fernwren, chowchilla, tooth-billed bowerbird, and more. It is also the home of the golden bowerbird, Australia's only representative of a group of maypole-building bowerbirds also found in New Guinea. There is also a chance of seeing blue-faced parrot finch, a highly sought-after species. We will spend the whole morning here, as the birding is spectacular. We will then head to the town of Mount Molloy, where we will search for squatter pigeon, gray-crowned babbler and great bowerbird. We may be lucky enough to see the great bowerbird at his bower, which he regularly visits to ensure everything is looking perfect. In the late afternoon we will head back to Mossman for the night.

Overnight at Mossman Motel and Holiday Villas

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 4: Daintree – Mount Carbine – Atherton

Sunday, September 19 (Queensland)

We will rise early this morning for a cruise on the Daintree River. Some of the birds we may see include white-bellied sea eagle, little kingfisher, azure kingfisher, brahminy kite, rajah shelduck, black bittern, and great-billed heron. We may also get to see the saltwater crocodile, known as a “Saltie” to locals and is an apex predator. Following the cruise, we will head to the Mount Carbine area for some dry-country birding. Our target species here will be Australia’s heaviest flying bird, the Australian bustard and also the intimidating blue-winged kookaburra. Lastly, we’ll head to the Atherton Tablelands, where we will spend the next few days.

Overnight at Atherton Tablelands in Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodges

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 5: Mount Hypipamee – Crater Lakes

Monday, September 20 (Queensland)

This morning we will head to Mount Hypipamee National Park, one of the volcanic crater features of the area which is surrounded by lush rainforest. Hearing the morning chorus in the tropical rainforest, we may encounter southern cassowary, Victoria’s riflebird, Atherton scrubwren, golden bowerbird, and other species that favor the higher elevations. We will have lunch in the town of Malanda. We will then visit the Nerada Tea Plantation, which is one of the best places to see Lumholtz’s tree kangaroo. Then we will head to Crater Lakes National Park, which contains two volcanic craters and many exciting birds such as rose-crowned fruit-dove, wompoo fruit dove, grey-headed robin, pale-yellow robin, to name a few.

Following dinner, we will venture out to Curtain Fig Tree for some spotlighting. Regular nocturnal species seen here include lesser sooty owl, barn owl, Australian owl-nightjar, and rufous owl.

Overnight at Atherton Tablelands in Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodges

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 6: Hasties Swamp – Wongabel State Park (Mabi forest) – Lake Tinaroo

Tuesday, September 21 (Queensland)

Today we’ll visit Hasties Swamp National Park, where we could see species such as wandering whistling duck, sarus crane, freckled duck, green pygmy goose, and scaly-breasted lorikeet. We will then walk the trail through a Mabi forest at Wongabel State Park where brown gerygone, orange-footed scrubfowl, and spectacled monarch all occur. Mabi forest is a threatened ecosystem with less than four percent of the original forest remaining. It is found only in the Atherton Tablelands. The boat ramp at Lake Tinaroo is another location we can stop at, where we may see brolga, magpie geese, and many others.

Overnight at Atherton Tablelands in Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodges

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 7: Atherton – Cairns – Melbourne

Wednesday, September 22 (Victoria)

We will head into Cairns for our first internal flight to Melbourne this morning. Once we arrive in Melbourne, you will have a free afternoon to explore the city. There is a great selection of restaurants along the Yarra River in Southbank. Dinner will be on your own tonight!

Overnight at Travelodge Southbank

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8: Melbourne – Dandenongs – Western Treatment Plant – Lorne

Thursday, September 23 (Victoria)

We'll have an early morning start to visit the Dandenong Ranges National Park, searching for the superb lyrebird. This iconic Australian bird is thought to be the original passerine, or closely related to it. It is famous for its mimicry and can mimic many of the other species that inhabit the area. We may also encounter crimson rosella, long-billed corella, eastern whipbird, and striated thornbill along with many others flitting around the enormous mountain ash and tree ferns. We will then head to the Western Treatment Plant for the rest of the day. The treatment plant is famous for being one of the best birding sites in Australia! Along with at least nine species of duck, thousands of shorebirds, and up to 12 species of raptors, the Western Treatment Plant is a great place to see crakes, rails, and many bush birds as well. Late in the day, we will head to Lorne, a lovely seaside town looking over Bass Strait, which will set us up for the next day on the heathlands and coastal forests along part of the Great Ocean Road. We will have dinner at the Lorne Pub.

Overnight at Grand Pacific Hotel in Lorne

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 9: Lorne – Anglesea – Bendigo

Friday, September 24 (Victoria)

We'll be birding in a variety of habitats searching for some fascinating species. We'll explore super coastal heathland near Anglesea in search of the elusive southern emu-wren. We may be lucky enough to see a striated fieldwren singing with its tail cocked atop saltbush. We will take a coastal walk at Point Roadknight, where, besides crested terns and Pacific gulls, we may see a hooded plover, which nests on the beach here. We will also seek out an extraordinary bird, the rufous bristlebird. Although it has an extremely small range, it is commonly seen along the Great Ocean Road. The "GOR" is also home to some of Australia's most iconic mammals; koala, eastern grey kangaroo, and black wallaby. Laughing kookaburras are common in this area. All these locations are along the beautiful Victorian coast, and it may be quite windy, so be prepared. In the mid-afternoon, we will head north to the town of Bendigo, the center of the Australian gold rush in the 1850s, where new species await.

Overnight at Quality Hotel Lakeside in Bendigo

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 10: Bendigo – Chiltern

Saturday, September 25 (Victoria)

Today we will be birding in different sections of Greater Bendigo National Park. The open eucalyptus forest is a stark difference to the coastal temperate rainforest and heathlands of the coast and where we will seek out some of the more elusive species, such as crested bellbird, purple-backed honeyeater, white-fronted honeyeater, and shy heathwren. The farmland around the parks can also be ideal for species such as wedge-tailed eagle, black-shouldered kite, and both little and long-billed corellas. In the early afternoon, we will head into Box-Ironbark Eucalyptus country at Chiltern-Mount Pilot National Park, where more than 150 bird species have been recorded and its on every Australian birder's go-to list. Dinner will be at Barnawatha Pub.

Overnight at the Lydoun Motel in Chiltern

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 11: Chiltern – Melbourne

Sunday, September 26 (Victoria)

Today we will rise early and head into Chiltern-Mount Pilot National Park to hear the morning chorus. Birds such as fuscous honeyeater, yellow-tufted honeyeater, speckled warbler, diamond firetail, and turquoise parrot occur here. The box-ironbark trees are among the most prolific flowering eucalypts, a major source of nectar and pollen for lorikeets, honeyeaters, and a wide range of invertebrates. We may also see mammals such as swamp wallaby and yellow-footed antechinus, a tiny marsupial in the same

family as the Tasmanian devil. In the late afternoon, we will head to Melbourne for the night in anticipation of our second internal morning flight to Tasmania. You will have a free night to explore Southbank again, or venture across the Yarra River into Melbourne city, one of the most livable cities in the world! Dinner is on your own tonight!

Overnight at Travelodge Southbank
Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

Day 12: Melbourne – Hobart – Bruny Island

Monday, September 27 (Tasmania)

Tasmania is our destination today, known for its incredible World Heritage forests and 12 endemic bird species. The southern island is a state of Australia and was once connected to the mainland, but the end of the ice age 12,000 years ago created the Bass Strait. We will fly to Hobart and then head down to Kettering to catch the ferry over to Bruny Island. Here it is possible to find all 12 of the Tasmanian endemic birds plus the swift parrot, one of the two migrating parrots in Australia. Bruny Island is made up of a northern and southern section connected by a narrow strip of land named the Neck, which is home to hundreds of little penguins (the world's smallest penguin!) and a quarter of a million breeding pairs of short-tailed shearwaters. Bruny Island also offers tantalizing locally produced food and premium quality wine. We will visit the best birding sites on the island and target any species we need based on the latest reports.

Overnight at Bruny Island Explorer Cottages
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 13: Bruny Island – Hobart

Tuesday, September 28 (Tasmania)

After spending the morning birding on Bruny Island and visiting Inala's property, we will head to Hobart. Here you will have the option of a free afternoon exploring the city of Hobart or some extra birding at Waterworks Reserve. It's up to you!

Overnight at Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 14: Hobart – Cradle Mountain

Wednesday, September 29 (Tasmania)

Following breakfast, we will head to the Cradle Mountain area. Cradle Mountain forms the northern end of the wild Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, itself a part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. We will check into our hotel and later in the afternoon head out for some more birding and wildlife spotting. Get ready for some amazing views!

Overnight at Cradle Mountain Hotel
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 15: Cradle Mountain

Thursday, September 30 (Tasmania)

In the fresh, crystal clean air of the Tasmanian highlands, we will transverse the Dove Lake Walk. We should see some magnificent wildlife; however, the spectacular scenery will be the highlight today. Some of Tasmania's endemic species such as black currawong, scrubtit, and Tasmanian scrubwren can be present here. We may also see some mammals such as echidna, platypus, and Tasmanian pademelon in this area, too. After a day out in the alpine air, we can relax at the lodge, look out for wandering wombats, and enjoy our final dinner together. We'll also go over the final checklist together!

Overnight at Cradle Mountain Hotel
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Day 16: Launceston – Melbourne

Friday, October 1 (Queensland)

We conclude our tour today. We will have breakfast at Cradle Mountain and then drive to Launceston for our final internal flight. We fly to Melbourne Airport for our connecting flights home.

Meals included: Breakfast