

Birds-of-paradise, Papua New Guinea

The island of New Guinea, north of Australia, is arguably an island-continent, where evolution has gone mad with birds, notably the extraordinary architects, landscape gardeners and collectors known as bowerbirds, and especially the aptly-named birds-of-paradise, the males of which are the most amazing birds on Earth. They come in all shapes and sizes, from the tiny starling-sized brilliant red and snow white King Birds-of-paradise to the huge heron-sized dark and rather sinister Black Sicklebill, with everything imaginable in between, including the beautiful bone china Blue Birds-of-paradise, Ribbon-tailed Astrapias with silky white tail streamers up to three times as long as their bodies, Twelve-wired Birds-of-paradise with candyfloss-like yellow plumes and curved tail-wires, King-of-Saxony Birds-of-paradise which have two long head-pennants they can wave at will and Raggiana Birds-of-paradise, perhaps the most famous of all, which have long, lush salmon red plumes which they fan over their heads and shiver whenever a female lands nearby. The list goes on and because most have traditional display trees which are known to local guides, with the help of these brilliant bird finders it is possible for small groups of visitors to see many of the birds-of-paradise very well on a trip to Papua New Guinea.