

West Papua: Snow Mountains



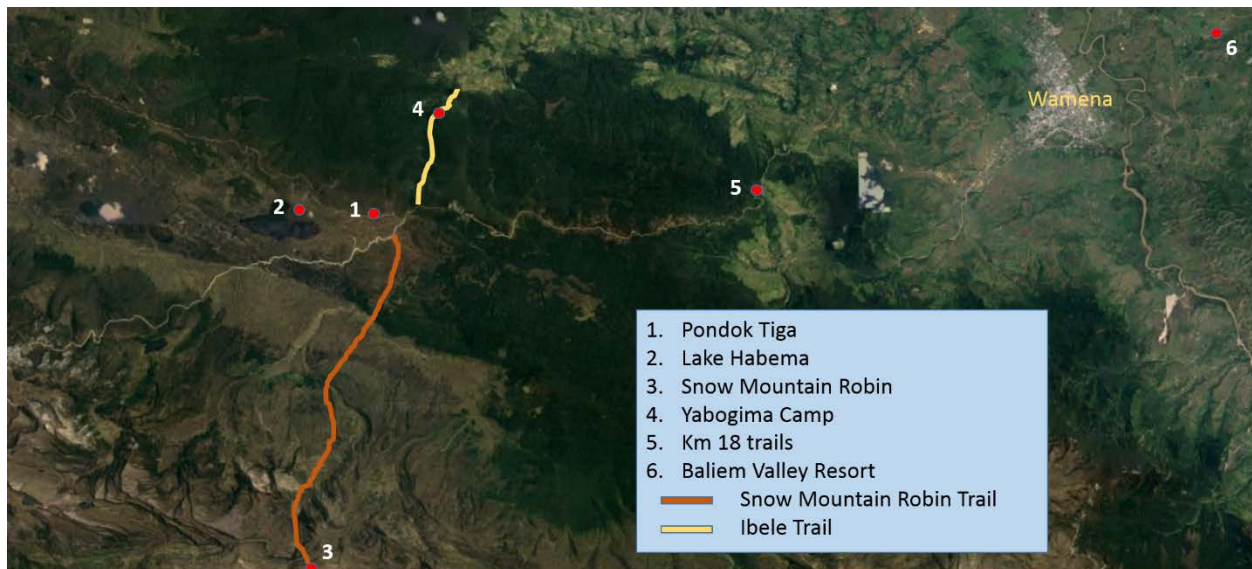
**Independent Budget Birding
September 28 – October 6, 2017**

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www.budgetbirders.com

Overview:

Located in the heart of West Papua, the town of Wamena provides easy access to the Snow Mountains. The main highway reaching the upper parts of the Baliem Valley and the Habema Lake area is now completely paved and can be reached in just over an hour's drive from the airport. The area around the lake and the Ibele Trail which heads steeply down through a neighboring valley provides access to a number of West Papua's high elevation specialties. Historically birding this section of West Papua was considered expensive even by Papua standards. Tour companies charge upwards of \$3700 for a 9-10 day tour and even local independent operators charge over \$200 per day for just coordinating logistics! Although I wanted to visit the Snow Mountains, I couldn't justify paying the ridiculous costs and figured there had to be more effective and cheaper options available. Luckily I had met some West Papua natives while birding Seram and via some of their contacts was able to find porters in Wamena to plan my trip to the Snow Mountains. Below are the details of coordinating a cheap trip to Habema, specifics on completing the Snow Mountain Robin trek, as well as details on birding the Ibele trail down to Yabogima Camp. Unfortunately some of the specific details on time and distances between locations and cost data were lost as my phone broke a few weeks later in the Comoros before I had backed up all the information.



Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Wamena (1000), meet porters and buy food (1030-1300), Arrive Pondok Tiga (1430), no afternoon birding due to heavy rain

Day 2: Upper Ibele Trail (0445-1830), rain/fog most of the day

Day 3: Snow Mountain Robin Trek, depart 0330, arrive at SMRO area at 1330, arrive back to cave at 1530, sleep

Day 4: Hike back to Pondok Tiga (0430-1200), Lake Habema (1330-1500), clearing at Upper Ibele (1600-1830)

Day 5: Hike down to Yabogima Camp (0600-1600)

Day 6: Birding below Yabogima to River crossing (0430-1800)

Day 7: Yabogima to Upper Ibele (0500-1100), ride back to Wamena (1330-1430), rain prevented evening birding

Day 8: Wamena Highway near km 18 (0700-1200), hung around hotel in afternoon

Day 9: Baliem Valley Resort (0600-0730), flight 0930 to Jayapura

Weather: Weather during our visit was hit and miss. The day we arrived, we experienced heavy rain which made setting up camp a bit interesting and prevented us from doing any birding on the way up. On the second day it rained almost the entire day and was quite foggy and cold, but that didn't seem to hinder birding too much. The weather for the Snow Mountain Robin trek was fantastic and probably played a major role in being able to finish the hike in 1 ½ days. The rest of the trip there was off and on rain, but overall it didn't affect birding too much. The trails are very muddy/water logged, it is absolutely necessary to bring rubber boots.

Dips: Biggest dip for me was Blue-capped Iffrita, but Stephan managed to get great looks at two after I walked away to check another area! I also missed Sooty Melidectes which Stephan also saw. Mountain Firetail, Subalpine Robin, and Snow Mountain Robin were only seen by me during the trek and weren't present in the typically visited areas. Crested Satinbird was also only seen by me on one occasion. Mountain Kingfisher was frustratingly only a heard only. No sign of Loria's Satinbird.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Stephan Lorenz and Claudia Cavazos for joining me on the trip and Claudia for providing some of the pictures of camp for this report. Thanks to the Swiss group of birders, David Marques, Jonas Landolt, and Raffael Aye, that we met for sharing info, especially Jonas for giving me his GPS track for the Snow Mountain Robin. Dominic Chaplin and Rob Mckay also provided good insight and GPS info from a trip they had completed to the area a few weeks before me.

Resources:

GPS Tracks, Waypoints, & Maps.me

For those who don't own a GPS, buy one. The Garmin Etrex 30 is extremely easy to use and I feel is essential to any independently traveling birder. Using a GPS and a set of coordinates helps to eliminate the guess work in directions and really makes it easier for others to find the same location. In this report I try to use GPS coordinates as much as possible and once again, encourage others to do the same.

If you don't want to buy a GPS, a great alternative (and to be honest, a better alternative for general waypoint marking) is the app Maps.me. This app allows you to download offline maps for anywhere in the world. You can easily upload a kmz file that will import all the waypoints and tracks from this trip into the map which is great for use in the field. You can also mark your own sightings in the app and then upload the kmz after your trip for others to use.

KMZ file of all waypoints and tracks in this report are at the follow link:

<https://www.amazon.com/cloudrive/share/ji1vGlaQiwgwUjSEuVtTIQwesNAXZeRnpLq5XTnA4cR>

If you do buy a Garmin GPS, you can download maps from the following site:

OSM Map: http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/OSM_Map_On_Garmin/Download: Download maps from around the world for Garmin

Google Translate

Another extremely helpful app is google translate. You can download Indonesian and then use it offline. This is extremely helpful when trying to communicate with porters, drivers, and other people that you meet.



Budget Breakdown:

The first 7 days of the trip, Sept 28th-Oct 4th, there were three of us. The last two days I was by myself. The total cost for the first part of the trip (Lake Habema/Ibele Trail) cost just over \$1,100 for the three of us, or roughly \$370 per person! The final two days that I spent by myself I spent an additional \$145, so in total my 9 day trip to the Snow Mountains cost just over \$500. Hopefully these numbers help to encourage independent travelers that it is possible to visit the Snow Mountains (and the rest of West Papua) for a very reasonable cost. Adding another 2 pax to split the very expensive transportation & gear costs as well as buying most of the food and gear in Jayapura prior to arriving in Wamena would have brought the cost down even more. Below is the budget breakdown as well as some more additional info about what we brought on the trip.

Total Costs For 7 Days For 3 People		
Category	Rupiah	USD
Transportation	3000000	\$ 223.88
Food	3200000	\$ 238.81
Gear	2500000	\$ 186.57
Porters (3)	3600000	\$ 268.66
Lead Porter/Cook	2100000	\$ 156.72
Organization Fee	500000	\$ 37.31
Total:	14900000	\$1,111.94
Additional cost for 2 days in Wamena/Robin Trek		
Snow Mountain Trek	400,000	\$ 29.85
Pilamo Hotel (2 nights)	800,000	\$ 59.70
Transport	500,000	\$ 37.31
Food	250,000	\$ 18.66
Total	1,950,000	\$ 145.52
My Total Cost For 9 Days		\$ 516.17

Food:

In total we bought about 3.2 million rupiah worth of food for the three of us plus four porters for a total of 7 days. We definitely had some food leftover, but after doing a few of these trips, I highly recommend bringing more food than less. It's only a little extra money and the alternative of having to ration/go hungry is way worse than spending a few extra dollars. If possible I would try to buy some of the more expensive food items (canned meat, etc) in Jayapura and fly it in with you. The cost of groceries in Wamena is insanely expensive so you could definitely save a good bit of money by flying in as much of your food as possible. It is also highly recommended to buy tarps in Jayapura before flying. You'll save a lot of money.

Food for 7 people included:

Rice: 2 bags (10 kg each)

Instant Noodles: About 80 packages

Eggs: Three cases (36 eggs in each case)

Sugar: 2 kg

Coffee: A few large packages

Tea: 1 box of 50 tea bags

Bread: 5 loaves

Canned Tuna: ~30 cans

Canned Meat: ~10 cans

Cooking Oil: one large container

Vegetables: Assorted greens, onions, carrots, peppers, garlic

Snacks: Nutella, cookies, candies, crackers, etc.

Camping Gear:

In addition to buying food, you will need to buy all camping supplies to be self-sufficient. The most important (and expensive) of these items will be tarps. Although at both Pondok Tiga and Yabogima there are wooden structures, you will need large tarps to cover them. We only brought 1 large tarp and two smaller ones. In hindsight, we definitely should have brought two large tarps in addition to the two smaller ones. The tarps were very expensive in Wamena and buying them in Jayapura or Jakarta before flying to Wamena could definitely save a good bit of money. Buying the additional camping items such as cooking gear, plates, machete, ax, seemed a bit excessive (surely the porters already own this stuff), but for us it wasn't worth trying to argue about and the cost was still much lower than going through any third party operator.

Below are the items we bought and rough costs (in rupiah):

Tarps: 1 8x6 (500,000) and 2 3x4 (150,000 each) *bring at least two 8x6 tarps*

Machete: 200,000

Ax: 200,000

Cooking gear: ~300,000

Misc: Rope, Candles, plates, silverware, cigarettes (for the porters), etc

Transportation:

Transportation to and from Lake Habema still remains one of the most expensive parts of the trip and with the now well paved road leading well past the lake, the cost is extremely unjustifiable and it shouldn't be too hard to negotiate much lower. Originally we were told the cost to get to the lake would be 4,000,000 rupiah (over \$300!) for an hour long drive! We were picked up at the airport by a 4wd truck that Demi had contacted and were driven to the Pilamo Hotel to meet our porters. Once we arrived, I asked Weneluk what the cost should be and he said 2,000,000. So I confronted the driver about the cost and after Weneluk had a few words with the driver, the price dropped to 2,000,000. This is still an insanely high fee for a drive up a paved road in very good condition. There are plenty of 4wd trucks in town so finding one to do the drive for cheaper shouldn't be too hard. For the return trip, we didn't coordinate a ride as originally we planned to hike down through the Ibele valley, but our porters refused to hike down through the valley due to safety concerns (more on that later) so for our return trip we hitched a ride down in a 4wd truck on our last afternoon. Even though we were hitching the driver still charged us 1,000,000 rupiah which is insane, but at that point, we didn't really have much bargaining power.



Logistics

First off, finding porters to visit the Lake Habema area should be very straight forward. Wamena is a tourist destination and many visitors go on multi-day hikes through the surrounding valleys to visit the various tribes that still remain in the area. Even at the airport we were approached by locals wanting to know if we needed guides and porters. Although you could probably do all coordination upon arrival, we wanted a little bit more assurance so I contacted Demi Wasage of Trek Papua about one week before our trip. Demi was then able to contact porter leader Mr Weneluk (085244560978) and arrange for him and three other porters to accompany us to Lake Habema for a week. The standard rate for a porter is 200,000 (~\$15) rupiah per porter per day. There is also a good chance you will be charged 300,000 rupiah per day for a cook to make all of your food. For us, the lead porter, Weneluk, was also the cook. We were unaware of the additional 300,000 per day cooking fee, so at the end Weneluk demanded 500,000 per day for his services which is a bit expensive. We settled on giving him a total of 350,000 per day, but be prepared to pay a bit more. In addition to porter fees, you'll also have to buy all of the food, plus additional camp necessities such as a machete, ax, tarps, cooking gear, ropes, candles, etc. These costs can add up quickly, but Weneluk was very good about only buying what we absolutely needed and overall the cost of this additional gear was still much less than going through some of the past operators birders have used.

Contacts:

Demi Wasage: Owner of Trek Papua, Demi will be able to make contact with a reliable group of porters as well as a driver. Demi only charged us 500,000 for his services which was very reasonable. If you do want an English speaking guide for the entire time during the trip, Demi should be able to find one for you as well. I'd plan on spending between 500,000-750,000 per day for an English translator/guide if you want one.

Weneluk: Lead porter for our trip. It will probably be quite difficult to get in contact directly with him, but if you choose to do so, his number is 085244560978. Weneluk was great. He and the other porters were extremely professional, set up a good camp, cooked great food, and even delivered food to us on the trail for lunch so we didn't have to come back from birding. If you can get this same group (or at least Weneluk) it is highly recommended. If for some reason you can't make contact with him or Demi, you should still not have too many problems just showing up at the Pilamo hotel and finding porters.

Safety:

A lot of the confusion and concerns about visiting the Snow Mountains centers around permits and safety concerns. Although I have heard of a few groups having issues in the Habema area, we ran into zero problems. All of the workers we met in the area were fairly friendly and didn't bother us at all. Although this sounds obvious, it is extremely important to just be very friendly with everyone you meet, smile a lot, and avoid confrontation. I also think that the group of porters we used knew the locals so I think that probably helped ease any tensions. On a few occasions, locals stopped by our tent and had a free meal and we also used a few to carry additional gear down to Yabogima Camp. Being a good neighbor and showing the locals that they can benefit (both through food and monetarily) goes a long way. The only potential safety concern we had is that we planned to stay in Yabogima for a few days and then hike downhill to one of the small villages and hitch a ride back to Wamena. After explaining this to our porters, they were very hesitant with the idea saying that all of the people in those villages were drunks and that we would get robbed. They said we could still do it if we all went as a large group (originally Stephan and Claudia were going to leave two days before me), but after some discussions we decided it would be best to just hike back up to Lake Habema and hitch a ride from there. The issue is that we had met a young man on the trail a few days prior who spoke perfect English and who I questioned about the logistics of walking down through the valley and hitching a ride back to Wamena. He didn't mention anything about the area being dangerous and seemed completely fine with our plan of walking down. So I am not entirely sure of the safety concerns of hiking down through the valley below Yabogima. It is entirely possible that foreigners would be fine and that it might have actually been an issue that our porters were the ones who would be in danger due to tribal conflicts. In the end we just felt it wasn't worth the risk. Just be aware that you might have some problems if you want to hike down through the valley.

Permits/Permission:

We did not have any issues with permits or permission during our visit. If you've spent any considerable amount of time in Indonesia, you'll learn that it's better to proceed cautiously, but not ask too many questions. If you go around Wamena asking for permits, surely, there's someone who will say that you need a permit. You'll have to go through a long process, get some papers signed a few times, pay some small fee, and go about your day. On the flip side, if you don't go asking, no one will care. When we arrived at the airport the police took a picture of our passport and when we started up to highway to Habema, the military registered the truck that was driving us up to the lake (we got out and introduced ourselves, but they didn't seem to care), but other than that, no one cared. I truly think the permit issue is a fabrication of a few local independent operators who are trying to stay relevant and justify the ridiculous daily fees that they charge per person.

Arrival:

We were met at the airport by our driver at 1000. We drove to the Pilamo Hotel and met Weneluk and our other porters. From here we spent about two hours driving around town buying all of our supplies and eventually were on the road just after 1300. Meeting the porters at the Pilamo Hotel is highly recommended as there's always an English speaking staff member present which can be helpful when meeting the porters for the first time. We also made reservations at that time to stay at the hotel upon our arrival back to Wamena at the end of the trip. To save some time, you might be able to have the porters buy most of the supplies before you arrive. Although this saves some time, you lose the oversight of the purchases, but for some this might be a worthwhile tradeoff.



Birding Locations

Birding the Habema/Ibele area can be broken up into four different areas, Lake Habema, the Snow Mountain Robin trek, Upper Ibele, and Yabogima area all of which are accessed from two main camp sites. In addition to these four locations, the main paved road up to the lake should be explored if time allows. Below are details on the two main campsites as well as the four main birding locations as well as some additional notes about birding along the main paved road as well as around Wamena.

Pondok Tiga (Camp Three): -4.134514, 138.70547

Located along the main road to Lake Habema, this campsite has been used by birders for the past two decades. Technically the original Pondok Tiga was located very near the start of the Ibele trail, but since the construction of the new highway, the camp site has been moved one kilometer closer to the lake along the dirt road heading towards the lake. The camp site consists of two wooden skeleton structures that can be covered by large tarps and made into a nice campsite. From the campsite, it is just over 1 kilometer back along the road to the start of the Ibele Trail. In the other direction, it is a 2.2 km walk to the first viewpoint where you can distantly scope for the teal or about a 4-5km hike to another access trail that will take you to the lakeside.

Lake Habema:

To be honest, birding around the lake is very subpar. Other than seeing a few specialties, it is much better to dedicate your time along the Ibele Trail. The only birds that you need to find around the lake are Salvadori's Teal, Papuan Harrier, Snow Mountain Munia, Snow Mountain Quail, and Sooty Melidectes. The closest spot to scan for the teal is about 2.2km from the campsite at -4.132501, 138.68814. From here you can very distantly scan the lake or walk down to a small rocky hill that provides a better look. Alternatively, you can continue walking along the main road to a roadside shack and take a trail down to the lakeside for much better views of the teal. The harrier can easily be seen flying around the lake and the munia and quail can be encountered anywhere in the area. Stephan saw a flock of munities from the rocky hill near the first scanning location and flushed a few quail from the roadside in the same general area. Sooty Melidectes is a fairly uncommon bird and should be looked for in the scrubby areas around the lake. We were unable to find any in this area, but Stephan later managed to see one in the open area near the beginning of the Ibele Trail. Mountain Firetail is possible throughout the area, but we didn't see any here.

Upper Ibele Trail:

The clearing at the beginning of the Ibele Trail as well as the first few hundred meters of the trail is by far some of the best birding in the area. The trail starts at -4.13317, 138.71348 (3352m) and after walking down through a large clearing, descends through mossy forests until an overlook at 3200m. Past this point the trail then descends along the river for about a kilometer and isn't really worth birding due to the river noise. From the clearing at the beginning of the trail we had a few good birds including Papuan Lorikeet, Painted Tiger-Parrot (very responsive to tape), Sooty Melidectes, and a pair of Macgregor's Honeyeaters that were nesting just above the first little stream crossing. At dusk the small series of grass steps at -4.132686, 138.7135 is a great spot to wait for the displaying New Guinea Woodcock and Archbold's Nightjar. Both the nightjar and woodcock were seen landing in this small open grassy area so sitting quietly in the weeds next to the area should produce good results. As you start down the trail, we encountered both Wattled Ploughbill and Crested Satinbird at -4.129387, 138.71354 just before the first small clearing. From the first small clearing until the second clearing, the mossy forest held Greater Ground Robin (-4.128924, 138.71339), Papuan Logrunner, and Lesser Melampitta. Just past the second clearing we had a very responsive Chestnut Forest-rail (-4.128241, 138.71371) and further down more Lesser Melampittas (quite common) and Papuan Logrunners (-4.126867, 138.71408). The dominant scrubwren species in this area is Large Scrubwren, and along with them we saw a few other species including Rufous-naped Bellbird, White-winged Robin, and Splendid Astrapia. Near the overlook at 3200m, I saw a single female Brown Sicklebill and Stephan saw a Black-mantled Goshawk. The hike from the overlook down to Yabogima Camp follows the river so it is quite noisy, but we did pick up a few good birds including Great Woodswallow, another Black-mantled Goshawk, Hooded Cuckooshrike, and Torrent Larks (most obvious on the walk back up).

Snow Mountain Robin Trek:

Most people take 3, 4, or even 5 days to complete this hike, but if you're in reasonable shape, you should be able to complete the hike in 2 days without too much stress. I did the hike in 1 ½ days including seeing the Snow Mountain Robin on day 1, but this isn't recommend as I was totally exhausted climbing the rock wall on day one and clambering around trying to locate the robin. Below are some details on the hike and recommendations on times to complete it based on physical fitness level. Unfortunately all of the detailed distances and times that I kept for the hike were lost when my phone broke, but these estimates should be very close to reality.

Start: Pondok Tiga (0330).

From Pondok Tiga, you walk just over 2 kilometers back to the main road and up to the start of the trail at -4.14602, 138.70867. From here you cross a large boggy area arriving at the top of a large valley roughly 3 km from the start and 5 km from Pondok Tiga. From the top of the valley you descend a very steep trail to a river at -4.170255, 138.7002 (I arrived here just after 0600). This area is also the only place that I found Subalpine Robin (4.169394, 138.70105). There is a very vocal pair at this location. Surprisingly this species was not encountered again during the hike despite a lot of playback. Many thanks to the Swiss group for telling me about that pair. Next you must cross the river (possibly a wet crossing depending on water levels) and cross a large valley. On the other side of the large valley is a possible campsite at -4.182862, 138.691748. From here the trail ascends back up the other side of valley, does a short drop into a small valley, and then ascends along a ridge to -4.206859, 138.68887 (I arrived at this location around 0900). From the end of the ridge to the cave is an additional 5 km and it arguably the worst section of the trail as there are a few up and down sections that are fairly annoying. After crossing a few more open areas and going up and down a few more hills, the trail once again ascends to the cave at -4.240631, 138.66947 (I arrived here at 1100 and my porters arrived at 1145). The hike from Pondok Tiga to the cave is just over 18km. From the cave to the rock wall is just over 1 kilometer, but it is a fairly tough hike. You first hike up a very steep hill/cliff and then cross a small open area before reaching the base of the actual rock wall. The section to climb is a grassy/muddy area. The climb is very steep and to be honest somewhat dangerous. Having ropes would probably be recommended, but I didn't have any gear so just climbed pulling myself up from grass tussock to grass tussock. This climb would be very tricky if it was wet or raining. I left the cave at about 1215 and made it to the top of the rock wall by 1320. From here, the hike is fairly easy as you've now reached the large granite rock slabs that the Snow Mountain Robin is found on. The Swiss group was lucky and encountered a bird at -4.256779, 138.67034 at the very beginning, but I had to climb much higher encountering my first pair at 1345 at -4.256582, 138.67382, 4239m, just over 22km from where I had started the morning. After watching this pair for a half hour I started my decent due to the threat of rain and saw three more birds just downhill from the first sighting at (-4.257112, 138.67177, 4208m). Climbing down the rock wall was quite precarious, but luckily I made it down in one piece and arrived at the cave around 1530 just before a large downpour.



Cave Camp

The next morning I departed the cave at 0430 to start the hike back to Pondok Tiga. I arrived back at the campsite shortly after 1100, but I did the return hike at a slow pace looking for birds along the way. The hike back could probably be completed in about 5 ½ hours if you hiked directly out. During the hike in and hike out I saw a number of the other open land specialties including Snow Mountain Quail (flushed three different times), multiple flocks of Snow Mountain Munias (including a large flock near the river), Alpine Pipit, and Papuan Grassbirds.

Although I packed light, I still took two porters with me because they wanted to travel as a pair (which is usually the case). Instead of the typical 200,000 per day, I was charged 300,000 for the additional hiking. Although I had the porters with me, I actually did the hike almost completely alone. On the hike in I was quite a ways in front of them and on the hike out they were quite a ways in front of me (I was birding slowly). It was very enjoyable to be able to do this hike solo.



The view from the top! The white line on the distant ridge in the middle is near the starting point!

Recommended Itineraries:

Although the Snow Mountain Robin hike is long and at high elevation, the hike itself is actually quite enjoyable with a fairly good trail for the entirety of the hike. Compared to some other hikes I've done in Indonesia, this was by far one of the best. Below are some recommended itineraries based on fitness levels and available time.

1 ½ Days: Not recommended, but definitely doable if you're in really good shape. Leave very early (0200-0330) and hike directly to the robin. Sleep in the cave and then hike back very early (0400-0430) to the lake arriving by midday with enough time to tick the teal in the afternoon (which is what I did) or bird the upper Iblele Trail. Pack light. You don't need a tent as sleeping in the cave with just a fire is quite enjoyable. You'll only be able to pull off this option if the weather is very good.

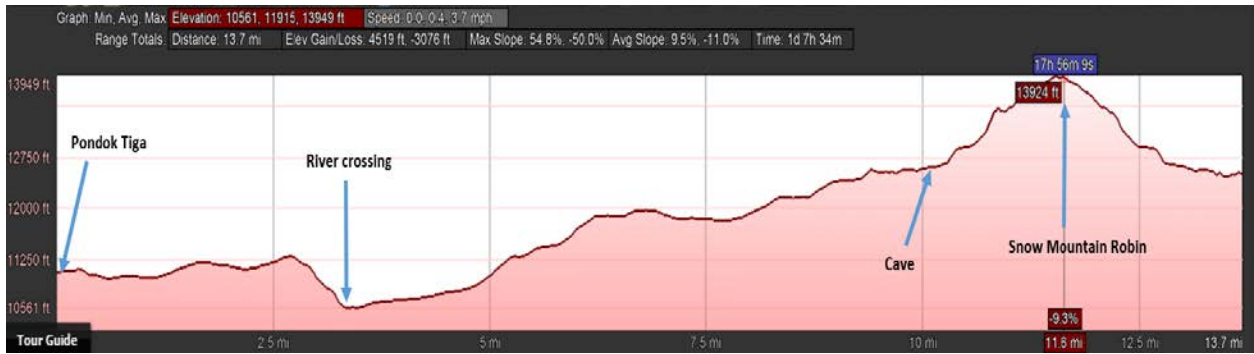
2 Days: This is what I recommend as long as you're in decent shape. Leave early (0400-0500) and spend all day walking to the cave. Walking at a decent pace with some nice stops you should still be able to make it to the cave in 9-10 hours easily. Early the next morning (0500) hike up to the robin arriving at the bottom of the rock wall by first light (no way I'd recommend trying to climb up it in the dark) and you'll be at the robin spot by 0630. Spend a few hours up top and then head back to the cave. Leave the cave by 1200 and walk back with just a few stops and you should easily be back around dark at 1800.

3 Days: Leave early (0500-0600) and spend the day making your way to the cave. Day 2 leave by 0600 and make your way up to the robin site. Come down by midday and sleep again at the cave. Day 3, walk out at birding pace and you'll be back by early afternoon.

4 or more Days: There are plenty of different options, but I'm not going to describe them all. Personally if you're taking 4 or more days then you must really be enjoying the scenery and bird life as that's only an average of 10km per day or less!



Overview of the Hike from Pondok Tiga to the location for the Snow Mountain Robin

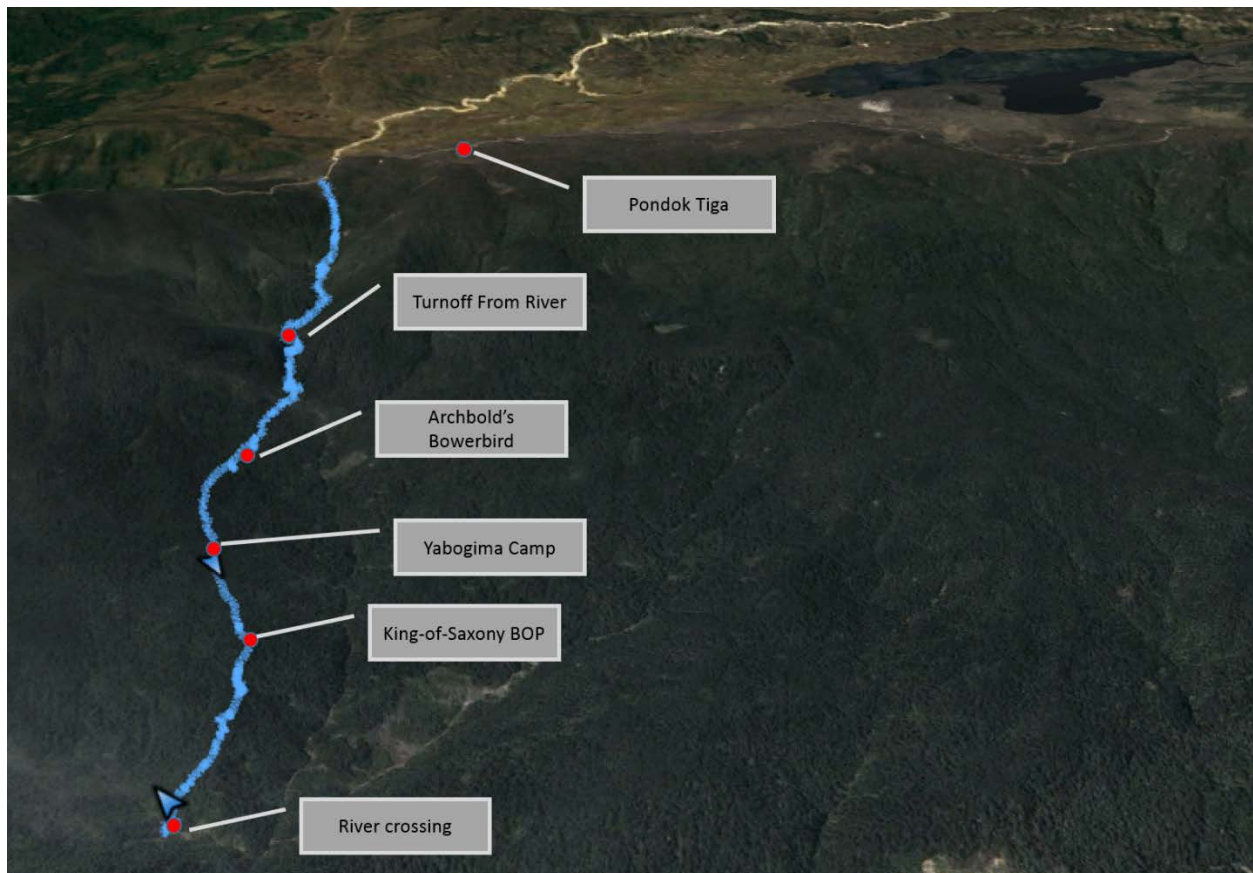


Elevational Profile showing the hike from Pondok Tiga to the Snow Mountain Robin and back down to the Cave



Yabogima Camp:

Yabogima Camp is located ~3.5km from the top of the Ibele trail at 2825m. This location provides access to a number of species that are usually not found higher along the trail. After paralleling the river for about a km, the trail veers left away from the river (-4.120453, 138.7178) and enters very good forest. This section, before the campsite, is a reliable spot for Archbold's Bowerbird. The area around -4.112609, 138.721285 is a good place to look. Also of interest in this area was a small group of Orange-crowned Fairy Wrens at -4.113768, 138.71994. From the campsite we had our only small flock of Black Sitellas. Below camp, there is a male King of Saxony BOP that displays around -4.099389, 138.72342. This is also the location where Stephan saw two Blue-capped Ifritas and we both had great looks at a male Baliem Whistler. We birded as far down the trail to the next river crossing at -4.094268, 138.72677. We had a Torrent Lark at this location as well as a few Mountain Peltops. Other interesting birds seen along the trail from the camp down to the river crossing included Papuan Scrubwren, Grey Thornbill, Black-breasted Boatbill, and Yellow-streaked Honeyeater (-4.096551, 138.72509).



Ibele Trail, from the top down to the river crossing below Yabogima Camp

Birding Along the Main Highway:

I spent one morning birding along the main highway. I took an ojek from Wamena for 200,000 and got dropped off near km18 at -4.127684, 138.831955. There are a few trails on the west side of the highway. Along the first trail that I explored I found a number of very good birds that aren't usually seen higher up along the Ibele trail. These included Short-tailed Paradigalla (-4.128425, 138.8306), Macgregor's Bowerbird (-4.128209, 138.83091), King-of-Saxony BOP, Baliem Whistler, Mountain Kingfisher, Blue-faced Parrotfinch, and Orange-crowned Fairywren. I also found Black-breasted Munias along the road at 04.12247, 138.83493. Eventually I hitched a ride back down to Wamena.

Baliem Valley Resort:

I hired an ojek in Wamena for 3 hours and paid 200,000. The “forest” patches before the resort are a very good area for Greater Superb BOP. The area is very disturbed, but in the morning it is very easy to find multiple Greater Superb BOPs as they perch up on the tops on the tallest trees and call loudly. I heard a few on my drive in and stopped once I found one close to the road (04.06431, 139.00389). I also had Ornate Melidectes at this location as well as Buff-banded Rail and Black-breasted Munia during the drive in.





Pondok Tiga



Yabogima Camp