

info@naturetravelbirding.com
www.naturetravelbirding.com



Northern India Birding Tour

14 DAY/ 13 NIGHT TOUR

OVERVIEW

India. The world in one country. It is home to over 1.3 billion people, but also hosts 9% of all mammalian, 14% of all avian, 8% of all reptilian, 6% of all amphibian, and 6% of all flowering plant species of the world. A country that conjures up images of colour, diversity, culture, mountains, food, texture, tigers and excitement. We will experience all this and much more on our Northern India Birding Tour.

DAILY SUMMARY

DAY 1	Departure from Delhi to Ramnagar, just outside Corbett National Park
DAY 2	Corbett National Park
DAY 3	Corbett National Park
DAY 4	Corbett National Park to Nainital
DAY 5	Nainital and Pangot
DAY 6	Nainital and Sattal
DAY 7	Nainital to Delhi
DAY 8	Delhi to Bharatpur with optional stop at Taj Mahal
DAY 9	Bharatpur and Chambal River day trip
DAY 10	Bharatpur and Keoladeo National Park
DAY 11	Bharatpur to Ranthambore
DAY 12	Ranthambore National Park
DAY 13	Ranthambore National Park
DAY 14	Final birding and return to Delhi via train

DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

DAY 1: Departure from Delhi to Ramnagar

After arriving at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi in the early hours of the morning, we will meet our driver who will be with us for the duration of the trip. We will miss most of Delhi's (notorious) traffic as we head northeast towards the town of Ramnagar, the gateway town for the Jim Corbett National Park. We will stop en route for lunch/tea/coffee as needed. On the way there we will enjoy our first sightings of White-throated Kingfisher, Black Kites, House and Jungle Crows and many waterbirds along the roadside. We will arrive at the town of Ramnagar just outside the park, where we will meet our local guide and hop into our open game-viewing vehicle.

We will head for the sacred Garjiya Devi temple on the Kosi river where we hope to see two very special birds : the stunning Ibisbill and the enigmatic Wallcreeper. This is also a good area for Red-wattled Lapwing, Great, Indian and Little Cormorant, White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstart, White-browed Wagtail and Gadwall.

Our dinner and overnight accommodation is in a comfortable hotel in Ramnagar.

🏠 Accommodation: Ramnagar

DAY 2: Corbett National Park

This morning we will commence our first Indian "safari" of the trip as we enter the Jim Corbett National Park.

The park is India's oldest national park (established in 1936) and has been a haven for wildlife lovers from all over the world for decades. We traverse the *Sal* tree forests alongside the Ramnagar river on our way to our home for the next two days, Dhikhala Forest Lodge. Our drive in might yield specials like the diminutive Collared Falconet, Changeable and Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Red Junglefowl and Kalij's Pheasant crossing the road and the superbly coloured Long-tailed Minivet.

Today we have a full day to enjoy the spectacular fauna and flora of Jim Corbett National Park. Our guide will attempt to show us as much of the park's diverse habitats as possible, and we will try to see as many of the 600 species of birds that have been recorded here as we can! We will look for Great Slaty Woodpecker, Great Hornbill, Lineated and Brown-headed Barbet, Emerald Dove and White-crested Laughingthrush in the forested areas, while the grasslands are good for Black Francolin, Golden-headed Cisticola and Hen Harrier. Birding along the river and at the lake area may also yield Stork-billed Kingfisher, Indian Pond Heron, Pallas's and Lesser Fish Eagle, Brown Crake, Red-headed Vulture, Tawny Fish Owl, Black-necked Stork and many more. The park is also home to a diverse range of reptiles (including Indian marsh crocodile and gharial)

and mammals, and with a lot of good luck a game drive may even yield the elusive and rare Bengal Tiger.

Tonight we will enjoy the warm hospitality at Dhikhala Forest Lodge.

🏠 Accommodation: Dhikhala Forest Lodge

DAY 3: Corbett National Park

We have another full day to explore more areas of magical Jim Corbett National Park. We will attempt to cover as much of the habitats as we can to ensure a good list of local birds. We will look for Ashy Bulbul, Himalayan Goldenback, Greater and Lesser Yellownape, Blue-throated Barbet, Large Cuckooshrike, Blue Whistling Thrush, Lesser Racket-tailed and White-bellied Drongo, Black-crested and Red-vented Bulbul, Osprey, Common Iora, Black-hooded Oriole, Paddyfield and Buffy Pipit, Oriental Skylark and many others.

Our dinner and accommodation is again at the Dhikhala Forest Lodge.

🏠 Accommodation: Dhikhala Forest Lodge

DAY 4: Corbett National Park to Nainital

After breakfast we head out of the park and further east towards the lower foothills of the Himalayan mountain range. We will traverse the rich agricultural soils of Uttarakhand province before heading upward on a winding mountain pass. Our destination today is the hill station of Nainital, set in a valley containing a beautiful lake and surrounded on all sides by mountains. The town has a decidedly European feel to it, but with the life force only India can provide.

After meeting our local guide we will set out and drive and walk along the many paths zig-zagging up and down the hills. The unique avian fauna of this district include Red-fronted Serin, Black-chinned Babbler, Green-backed and Black-throated Tit, and Great, Lineated and Coppersmith Barbet, and many more. Woodpeckers will also be high on our target list, with Brown-fronted, Grey-capped Pygmy, Stripe-breasted, Streak-throated, Brown-capped Pygmy, Grey-headed, Himalayan and Rufous-bellied all possible. Two other big targets for this area are Hill Partridge and Koklass Pheasant.

In the late afternoon we will head to our upmarket accommodation (and our home for three nights), the Vikram Vintage Inn in the heart of Nainital for dinner and a good night's rest.

🏠 Accommodation: Vikram Vintage

DAY 5: Nainital and Pangot

Today we head even further skywards (up to 2600 metres above sea level) and go and look for some Himalayan species. We will enjoy a packed breakfast while we bird next to the road and footpaths in the area of the hill station of Pangot. We can see Himalayan and Bearded Vulture, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Rock Bunting, Rufous-breasted and Altai Accentor, as well as Spotted and Slaty-backed Forktail. The numerous creeks and wooded areas are home to an amazing array of flora and fauna, including leopard, Himalayan civet, barking deer, sambhar and ghoral.

We will enjoy lunch at the Jungle Lore Lodge, where White-throated Laughingthrush, Golden Bush Robin, Eurasian Jay, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch and Rufous Sibia are plentiful in the gardens.

In the afternoon we might find a variety of thrushes, Whiskered Yuhina, Steppe and Black Eagle, and with a lot of luck and patience even Cheer Pheasant. We will also enjoy breathtaking views of the mighty Himalayas in the distance, with even the 7800 metre high Nanda Devi peak visible.

Tonight we again enjoy the warm hospitality and excellent cuisine at the Vikram Vintage Inn in Nainital.

 **Accommodation: Vikram Vintage**

DAY 6: Nainital and Sattal

We head even further east today towards the area of Sattal (Hindi for "seven lakes"), an interconnected group of seven freshwater lakes near the town of Bhimtal. We will enjoy many short drives and walks in the area during the day, and a packed lunch will be provided.

Some of today's special birds are Blue-winged Minla, Crimson and Green-tailed Sunbird, Brown Fish Owl, Red-billed Leiothrix, Common Rosefinch, the always noisy Slaty-headed and Red-breasted Parakeet, Grey Treepie, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Slaty-blue and Little Pied Flycatcher, Lemon-rumped Warbler, Brown Wood Owl, Crested Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Bar-tailed Treecreeper and the skulking Scaly-breasted and Pygmy Wren Babblers.

We might also see another incredible bird of the area, the Brown Dipper, as it dives and feeds underwater in the cold mountain streams.

After a long day of ticking, we head back to our hotel in Nainital.

 **Accommodation: Vikram Vintage**

DAY 7: Nainital to Delhi

After breakfast we embark on our drive back to Delhi. This will be a time to catch up on some sleep or a time to put pen to paper and coordinate our birding lists or other notes. We will also need to keep our eyes open for various raptors during our drive, as well as waterbirds along the many rivers we will cross.

The greater Delhi area is home to almost 25 million people and through most of its history has served as a capital of various kingdoms and empires. It is also an ornithologist's haven, with more than 450 species of birds having been recorded here, second only to Nairobi when it comes to bird-rich capital cities of the world. So we need to keep our eyes open!

Our hotel for the evening is on the outskirts of Delhi and will offer very modern and comfortable accommodation, as well as authentic Indian and international cuisine.

🏠 Accommodation: Comfortable Hotel in New Delhi

DAY 8: Delhi to Bharatpur with optional stop at Taj Mahal

Today we drive south on the comfortable Yamuna Expressway towards the city of Bharatpur in Rajasthan. We will meet our local guide and visit the Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary on the outskirts of the city. It is a small but important bird sanctuary and very rich in avifauna. It consists of a huge lake surrounded by lush vegetation. Here we hope to catch up with Bar-headed Goose, White-breasted Waterhen, Indian Spot-billed Duck, River Lapwing, Red-naped Ibis, Dalmatian Pelican, River Tern, Painted Stork, White, Citrine, Yellow and White-browed Wagtail, Spotted Redshank and Northern Pintail.

We will then travel to the nearby town of Agra to visit the Taj Mahal, one of the wonders of the modern world. It was built in the 17th century as a monument to true love and is surely one of the greatest sights in the world to behold. Our local guide will give us some fascinating information about this magnificent marble masterpiece.

Afterwards we will make the short trip to our hotel in Bharatpur, The Bagh Hotel. It is set in 12 acres of two hundred year-old gardens. We have a good chance to see Large Grey Babbler, Indian Grey Hornbill, Oriental White-eye and Rufous Treepie in the gardens! There is even a resident Jungle Cat and if we are lucky we could see an Indian Civet prowling around before settling in for the night.

🏠 Accommodation: The Bagh

DAY 9: Bharatpur and Chambal River day trip

After breakfast we will drive southeast to the National Chambal Sanctuary, situated on the Chambal river. It is a river of legend and mystery, and finds mention in many ancient

scriptures. It is considered pollution free and hosts a dazzling array of fauna, including the critically endangered Ganges river dolphin, gharial crocodile and red-crowned roof turtle.

At least 320 species of birds inhabit the riverine sanctuary. We hope to see Indian Skimmer, Black-bellied Tern, Sarus and Demoiselle Crane, Indian Courser, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Red-crested and Ferruginous Pochard, Greylag Goose, Comb and Indian Spot-billed Duck, Northern Pintail, Lesser Whistling Teal, Red-crested and Common Pochard, Pied Kingfisher, Greater and Lesser Coucal, Chestnut-bellied and Painted Sandgrouse, Common Snipe, Eastern Curlew, Spotted and Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Green, Terek, Common and Marsh Sandpiper, Little and Temminck's Stint, Greater Painted-snipe, Eurasian and Great Thick-knee, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Pacific Golden, Common Ringed, Long-billed, Little Ringed, Kentish and Lesser Sand Plover.

We will return to our hotel in Bharatpur for some more authentic Indian cuisine and a good night's rest.

 **Accommodation: The Bagh**

DAY 10: Bharatpur and Keoladeo National Park

Today we will spend a full day in the famous Keoladeo National Park in the city of Bharatpur. It was once the duck-hunting forest of the local maharajas but was declared a protected sanctuary in 1971. This UNESCO World Heritage site is home to many mammals and reptiles, but birds, especially waterbirds, are the main attraction. It is 29 square kilometres of forests and wetlands with over 400 species of birds recorded.

We will spend our time either by foot or on cycle-rickshaws as we look for Egyptian Vulture, Greater and Indian Spotted Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Spotted Owlet, Grey Francolin, Indian and Oriental Magpie Robin, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Plain and Ashy Prinia, Asian Pied, Brahminy and Rosy Starling, Yellow-throated Sparrow, Jungle and Yellow-eyed Babbler, Black Bittern, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Bluethroat, Indian Pond Heron, Common Tailorbird, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Hume's Leaf Warbler, Black Redstart, Eurasian Coot, Bay-backed and Brown Shrike, Great, Little and Intermediate Egret, Northern Shoveler, Bronze-winged Jacana, Woolly-necked Stork, Black-crowned Night Heron, Indian Scops Owl and Sarus Crane.

We will be tired but satisfied after today and will head to The Bagh for our last night in Bharatpur.

 **Accommodation: The Bagh**

DAY 11: Bharatpur to Ranthambore

We will enjoy breakfast at The Bagh and then drive southwest to Ranthambore National Park. It was established as a game sanctuary in 1955 by the Indian government and was declared one of the "Project Tiger" reserves in 1973. It became a national park in 1980 and was enlarged twice, in 1984 and 1991, to its current size of almost 400 square kilometres. The park is part of the larger Ranthambore Tiger Reserve which encompasses over 1300 square kilometres and is home to a vast ecosystem of flora and fauna. To protect the fragile environment only a limited section of the reserve and the park is open to the public.

It is one of the best places in India (and the world) to see the Bengal tiger in its natural habitat. The park is also rich in other fauna, such as sambhar, spotted deer, wild boar, sloth bear and nilgai, as well as a wide variety of trees, plants and of course birds.

We will do our safari on open Jeep-like vehicles with a local guide on hand to show us some of the 300 species of birds that have been recorded here.

Some of the most important birds include Indian Courser, Painted Spurfowl, Indian Skimmer, Indian Grey Hornbill, Asian Openbill, Black Stork, Greater Painted-snipe, as well as a variety of Bee-eaters, Cuckoos, Nightjars, Kingfishers, Quails, Storks, Geese, Crakes, Snipes, Sandpipers, Gulls, Terns, Eagles, Darters, Cormorants, Egrets, Herons, Bitterns, Flamingos, Shrikes, Treepies, Orioles, Cuckoo-Shrikes, Minivets, Drongos, Flycatchers, Ioras, Finches, Wagtails and many more.

The arid area around our accommodation is also good for a variety of birds and other fauna. We will see this area when we reach our home for the next three nights.

🏠 Accommodation: Tiger Den Resort

DAY 12: Ranthambore National Park

We will spend the full day in Ranthambore in search of the King of the jungle, as well as looking for many of our feathered friends. We will try to cover as much of the habitat in and around the park as we can, from the steep limestone cliffs and open grasslands to the dry deciduous forest mixed with riverine woodland, as well as the bamboo thickets and various lakes and wetlands that dominate the park and surroundings.

We hope to see Crested Honey Buzzard, Crested Serpent Eagle, Great Stone-curlew, River Tern, Painted Sandgrouse, Yellow-footed Pigeon, Alexandrine and Plum-headed Parakeet, Brown Fish Owl, Spotted Owlet, Black-rumped Flameback, White-bellied Drongo, White-browed Fantail, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and Crested Bunting amongst many others. Tonight we will have dinner and sleep at the Resort again.

🏠 Accommodation: Tiger Den Resort

DAY 13: Ranthambore National Park

Today is another full day in and around the park, and depending on which birds and animals we still need to see, we can discuss the various options with our local guide.

We might be lucky to see Oriental Honey Buzzard, Painted Spurfowl, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, and White-naped Woodpecker, or even something very rare like a Black or Great Bittern!

If we still haven't seen a tiger we'll concentrate our efforts to find one today! It is an experience one always treasures and remembers. We might even be lucky enough to see a leopard, statistically an even rarer sighting than that of a tiger!

Tonight will be our last night of the trip, and we will spend it at the Resort again.

🏠 **Accommodation: Tiger Den Resort**

DAY 14: Final birding and return to Delhi via train

After breakfast we will drive to Sawai Madhopur station to board an airconditioned Sleeper Class train to Delhi. We will arrive at Hazrat Nizamuddin station in the early evening, and depending on the time of your flight, we will either transfer to a comfortable hotel close to the airport or take you straight to the Indira Gandhi International Airport, where our Indian trip-of-a-lifetime began 2 weeks ago.

Thank you for choosing Nature Travel Birding.