

A two week tour that takes you across some great birding and wildlife hotspots in Northern India.

High in endemics and migrants, you will see species - both feathered and non-feathered found nowhere else in the country. From the forested foothills of the Himalayas & the great flood plains of the Gangetic river system to the ancient Aravallis, this trip encompasses a variety of habitats and regions and will offer an astounding number of species.

Avisfera has tailor-made this trip to offer up some of the best birding in the country, with great spots, good guides and some truly unique experiences. Get ready to chalk down those lifers and specials!



# **Trip Outline**

Day 1	Arrive at Delhi. Check in and overnight at a hotel in Delhi.
Day 2	After breakfast drive to Chambal. Overnight at the Chambal Safari Lodge.
Day 3	Whole day birding around Chambal. Overnight at the lodge.
Day 4	Drive to Agra, local sightseeing then onwards to Bharatpur. Overnight at the Birder's Inn, Bharatpur.
Day 5	Whole day's birding in Bharatpur. Overnight at the inn.
Day 6	Early morning birding in the park. Depart to Sawai Madhopur, arriving for lunch. Afternoon Jeep safari at Ranthambhore. Overnight at a lodge in Ranthambhore.
Day 7	Morning and evening jeep Safaris at Ranthambhore. Overnight at a lodge in Ranthambhore.
Day 8	Depart early morning by train to Delhi. Lunch at Delhi and transfer to your overnight train to Kathgodam.
Day 9	Full day of birding around Pangot and Chafi. Overnight at a lodge in Nainital.
Day 10	Full day of birding around Sattal and Nainital. Overnight at a lodge in Nainital.
Day 11	Nainital to Corbett National Park. Birding at Mangoli Valley en route. Overnight at The Himalayan Outback Camp, Corbett.
Day 12	Whole day birding outside the national park. Overnight at The Himalayan Outback Camp.
Day 13	Early morning departure for Dhikala. Birding and wildlife viewing along the way. Overnight at Dhikala Forest Resthouse.
Day 14	Full day at Dhikala then drive back to the resort. Overnight at a resort in Corbett National Park.
Day 15	Morning departure to Delhi by road. Late night connect to your flight back home.

# Your tour price will include:

- All accommodation on twin/double share basis.
- All meals starting with breakfast on day 2 from till dinner on the last day. Tea and coffee and soft drinks.
- All entry fees and permit cost for all National Parks as mentioned.
- Guided excursions as mentioned in the plan including Jeep safaris, boat ride and bird walks etc.
- A naturalist guide for the entire duration of the tour and local guides at all destinations.
- Road transfers by air-conditioned vehicle and rail journeys by air-conditioned coaches between locations as specified in the itinerary.

Exclusions: Any expenses of personal nature like beverages, alcohol, laundry, telephone etc., souvenirs and tips.

# **Accommodation and Food**

#### Delhi

Your first port of call and a hub you will cross a few times during this trip, accommodation is in smart and contemporary small hotels and has all the amenities and food here caters to international travellers.

#### Chambal

The luxurious **Chambal Safari Lodge** is a heritage home of the erstwhile feudal chief of the region. Apart from being well wooded with a lot of resident wildlife, the place has lots of character too. The accommodation combines the warmth of local homes with the comfort of modern amenities. Every effort has been made to make this lodge as eco-friendly and sympathetic to its surroundings as possible. The Chambal Safari lodge offers twelve rooms which are spacious, fully equipped with western amenities and period furniture. The Lodge kitchens serve authentic 'home cooked' buffet meals with fresh organically grown ingredients. Most of the produce is from their own farms or procured directly from the local farmers.



#### Bharatpur

The Birders Inn, just outside the park entrance has been an all-time favourite with birders. This family run inn, has 20 rooms that are modern, comfortable and come equipped with air-conditioning, overhead fans, and cable TV. Each room has ensuite facilities with hot and cold running water and a shower. The Birders inn reputation has been built on its warm hospitality and the personal service offered by cordial and friendly staff.

#### Corbett

The Himalayan Outback Camp is located far away from the town, on the banks of the river Ramganga in a valley, lies the Western Ramganga River Lodge run by the Himalayan Outback. Accommodation is in adobe style mud huts with thatched roofs that have attached bathrooms equipped with western loos that have running cold water, hot water is available on request. Delectable, delicious food is served in a common dining room that overlooks the river. Cuisine is a mix of Indian and continental fare.

**Dhikala Forest Rest House Complex** is the largest tourist rest house complex within Corbett Tiger Reserve. It stands atop the left bank of Ramganga River, overlooking the expansive grasslands called 'chaurs', further below which is the huge

Ramganga reservoir, the heart of Corbett. The grasslands of Dhikala are home to a small but endangered population of Hog Deer.



Being the largest complex, accommodation varies from simple dormitory bunk beds, to more comfortable rooms, to the old heritage building in middle of the complex called the "Old FRH".

Over the last few years, each place of stay within the Tiger Reserve has been tastefully restored, making it a very pleasant stay. In addition, our team inspects and readies each room prior to the arrival of our guests.

Essential toiletries, bed and bath linen are carried with us and

replaced for the duration of your stay. Meals at Dhikala are at the restaurant in the complex which serves vegetarian food.



# **Geography and Natural History**

### Chambal

National Chambal Sanctuary, also called the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, is a 5,400 sq. km. tri-state protected area in northern India for the critically endangered Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), the Red-Crowned Roof Turtle (*Batagur kachuga*) and the endangered Gangetic River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*). Located on the Chambal River near the tri-point of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, it was first declared in Madhya Pradesh in 1978 and now constitutes a long narrow eco-reserve co-administered by the three states. Within the sanctuary the pristine Chambal River cuts through mazes of ravines and hills with many sandy beaches.

Other large threatened inhabitants of the sanctuary include Mugger crocodile (Crocodylus palustris), Smooth-coated Otter



Skimmers and Gharial on the sandbars

(Lutra perspicillata), Striped Hyaena (Hyaena hyaena) and Indian Wolf (Canis lupus pallipes). Chambal supports 8 of the 26 rare turtle species found in India, including Indian Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle (Chitra indica), Three-striped Roof turtle (Batagur dhongoka) and Crowned river turtle (Hardella thurjii). Some of the other reptiles present here are Indian flapshell turtle (Lissemys punctata), Softshell Turtle (Nilssonia gangetica), Indian Roofed Turtle (Pangshura tecta), Indian Tent Turtle (Pangshura tentoria) and Monitor lizard (Varanus bengalensis).

Some of the mammals here include, Rhesus Macaque (Macaca mulatta), Langur (Semnopithecus dussumieri), Golden Jackal (Canis aureus), Indian Gray Mongoose (Herpestes edwardsii), Asian Palm Civet (Paradoxurus hermaphroditus), Wild Boar (Sus scofra), Nilgai (Boselaphus tragocamelus), Sambar (Cervus unicolor), Chinkara (Gazella bennettii), Indian Porcupine (Hystrix indica), Indian Hare

(Lepus nigricollis), Indian Flying Fox (Pteropus giganteus) and Indian Hedgehog (Paraechinus micropus).

The National Chambal Sanctuary is listed as an important bird area and is a proposed Ramsar site. At least 320 species of resident and migratory birds inhabit the sanctuary. The most sought after is the Indian skimmer (Rynchops albicollis) Sarus Crane, Pallas's Fish Eagle and Indian Courser. Winter visitors include Black-bellied Terns (Sterna acuticauda), Red-crested Pochard (Netta rufina) and Ferruginous Pochard (Aythya nyroca) and Bar-headed Goose (Anser indicus). Other species include Great Thick-knee (Esacus recurvirostris), Greater Flamingos, Oriental Darter (Anhinga melanogaster), and Brown Hawk Owl (Ninox scutulata).

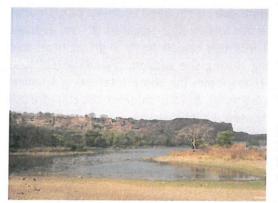
#### **Bharatpur**

The Keoladeo Ghana National Park formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, is a famous avifauna sanctuary that plays host to thousands of birds especially during winter. The erstwhile duck-hunting reserve of the Maharajas is one of the major wintering areas for large numbers of aquatic birds from central Asia. Keoladeo Ghana

National Park is a man-made and man-managed wetland. The 29 sq km reserve dry grasslands, woodlands, woodland swamps, and wetlands. These diverse habitats are home to 366 bird species, 379 floral species, 50 species of fish, 13 species of snakes, 5 species of lizards, 7 amphibian species, 7 turtle species, and a variety of other invertebrates. Every year thousands of migratory waterfowl visit the park for wintering breeding etc. The Sanctuary is one of the richest bird areas in the world, known as a nesting ground as well as a migratory site. Some of the target birds are Siberian Rubythroat (Luscinia calliope), Greater Painted Snipe (Rostratula benghalensis), Black Bittern (Ixobrychus flavicollis), Ferruginous Duck (Aythya nyroca), Baikal teal (Anas formosa), Dusky Eagle Owl (Bubo coromandus), Sociable Lapwing (Vanellus gregarius), Large-tailed Nightjar (Caprimulgus macrurus), Red Knot (Calidris canutus) and Demoiselle Crane (Anthropoides virgo). The rare Siberian cranes used to winter in this park but this central population of Siberian Cranes is now extinct.



Red-naped Ibis



The central landscape of Ranthambhore

### Ranthambhore

The National Park sprawls languidly across 824 sq. km. of contiguous, drydeciduous forests where the rolling Vindhya and craggy Aravalli Hills meet. The park lies at the edge of a plateau and is bounded in the north by the Banas river and to the south the Chambal river. The park's forests were once the private hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Jaipur, but today Ranthambhore is prime example of Project Tiger's conservation efforts and is an important destination for visitors hoping to see the Bengal tiger in its natural habitat. Other major fauna include Leopard, Jungle Cat, Caracal, Sloth Bear, Hyena, Indian Fox, Jackal, Sambar and spotted deer, Nilgai and wild boar. Over 260 species of birds are reported. Marsh crocodiles are

found in the lakes and river and the endangered Gharial and Gangetic river Dolphin is found in the Chambal river. The area is peppered with old crumbling walls, ruined pavilions, wells and other relics of a glorious past, including the the impressive 10th century Ranthambhore fort.

#### Corbett

Corbett Tiger Reserve is India's first and one of her finest Tiger Reserves. It supports a strong historical background which can be traced to the early 1800's when its forests were private property of the rulers of the princely state of Tehri Garhwal. Nestling in the foothills of the mighty Himalayas, Corbett Tiger Reserve lies mainly in the hilly districts of Nainital, Almora

and Pauri Garhwal. At present the Tiger Reserve covers an area of 1318.54 sq km and includes within it Corbett National Park (520.82 sq km) and Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary(301.18 sq km) and Reserve Forest (496.54 sq km). Three rivers feed Corbett Tiger Reserve - Ramganga, Sonanadi and Palain. Besides these, the Mandal River flows in through the northeast, forming a portion of the northeastern boundary and merging with the Ramganga River at Domunda. The Kosi River forms the eastern boundary of the reserve but does not enter the park at any point.

Besides, being home to the Bengal Tiger (Panthera tigris), Corbett is also the northern most tract of habitat for the Asiatic Elephant (Elephas maximus) and one can see large herds in the grasslands during the summer months. Other mammals of the reserve include the Leopard (Panthera pardus), Jungle Cat (Felis chaus), Leopard Cat (Felis bengalensis), 4 kinds of deer - Sambar (Cervus unicolor), Hog Deer (Axis porcinus), Spotted Deer (Axis axis), Barking Deer (Muntiacus muntjak), Nilgai (Boselaphus tragocamelus), Rhesus Monkey (Macaca mulatta) & Langur Monkey (Semnopithecus schistaceus), Ghoral or Mountain Goat (Nemorhaedus goral), Wild Boar (Sus scrofa), Sloth Bear (Melursus ursinus). Indian Grey Mongoose (Herpestes edwardsii), Small Indian Civet (Viverricula indica), Indian Crested Porcupine (Hystrix indica), Asiatic Jackal (Canis aureus), Yellow-throated Marten (Martes flavigula) etc. There have also been rare sightings of Serow (Capricornis sumatraensis) and the Himalayan Black Bear (Selenarctos thibetanus). The Mugger or the fresh water Crocodile (Crocodylus palustris), Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus), Common Otter (Lutra lutra monticola). Smooth-coated Otter (Lutra perspicillata), Small-clawed Otter (Aonyx cinerea), turtles and a variety of fishes; Golden Masheer (Barbus tor putitora), Goonch



A forest road in Corbett

(Bagarius yarelli), Trout, etc are seen in Ramganga River systems. Reptile species include Monitor Lizard or the Bengal Monitor (Varanus bengalensis), King Cobra (Ophiophagus hannah), Indian Rock Python (Python molurus), Common Trinket Snake (Coelognathus helena), Common Indian Krait (Bungarus caeruleus) and Spectacled or Indian Cobra (Naja naja). Corbett is also a bird watchers paradise and some of the avian attractions include a variety of Woodpeckers, Kingfishers, Hornbills, Parakeets, Shrikes, Barbets, Drongos, Minivets, Storks, Owls, Pheasants, Eagles, Vultures and Harriers.

#### **Nainital**

Nainital district in Kumaon consists of numerous lakes ensconced by mountains and forested hill slopes. These lakes form a part of an import freshwater biome.



Indian Skimmers



Small Pratincole



Bar-headed Geese



Rufus Bellied Niltava

The lakes of Sattal and Bhimtal are surrounded by moist oak, Deodar and Cypress are paradise for avian life. Situated at an average elevation of around 1300 mts this region hosts a lot of local and altitudinal migrants moving during the season. Mountain streams with lot of moist fern patches make for some interesting species. Mountain Bulbul (Ixos mclellandii), Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush (Garrulax rufogularis), Striated Laughingtrush (Garrulax striatus) Golden Bush Robin (Tarsiger chrysaeus), Small and Rufous-bellied Niltavas, Chestnut-headed and grey-bellied Tesias, Spotted Forktail (Enicurus maculatus) Nepal Wren Babbler (Pnoepyga immaculata) Himalayan Woodpecker (Dendrocopos himalayensis) and Khalij Pheasant (Lophura leucomelanos) are some of the birds to be seen here.

Pangot and around are predominately montane forests dominated by Pine with Oak, Rhododendron and Ringal. Snow-capped peaks loom in the distance and forest patches intersperse open valleys and grassy slopes make for some different species. Black-headed and Eurasian Jays, Lammergier (Gypaetus barbatus), Himalayan Griffon (Gyps himalayensis), Aquila Eagles, Green-backed Tit (Parus monticolus), Spot-winged (Parus melanolophus), Hill Partridge (Arborophila torqueola), Red-billed Blue Magpies (Urocissa erythrorhyncha), Long-tailed Minivets (Pericrocotus ethologus), Slaty-headed Parakeets (Psittacula himalayana), Cheer Pheasant (Catreus wallichii), Koklass (Pucrasia macrolopha), Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers (Dendrocopos hyperythrus) and Mistle Thrush (Turdus viscivorus) are some of the birds we expect to see.

# **Detailed Itinerary**

#### Jan 20: Day 1: Arrival Delhi

Arrive at New Delhi Airport, where you will be met and taken to your hotel for the night. Overnight at a hotel in Delhi's Aerocity.

### Jan 21: Day 2: Delhi / Chambal

Post breakfast drive down by mini-coach to Chambal. The drive is about 270 km. and will take about 5 hrs. There will be refreshment and bathroom breaks along the way. Post lunch we drive to the Sarus crane wetland area — scanning for the Sarus crane and more species like Bluthroat, Black-breasted Weaver, Red-headed Bunting, Black-headed Ibis, Wood Sandpiper and Jack Snipe. Overnight at the Chambal Safari Lodge.

#### Jan 22: Day 3: Chambal

Early breakfast and depart for the National Chambal Sanctuary. Travelling on a small boat on the Chambal River is a special experience and we hope to see Indian Skimmer alongside close views of Gharial, an endemic crocodilian. Other bird species will include Kentish Plover, Great Thick-Knee, Black-bellied Tern, Bonelli's Eagle, Osprey, Indian Eagle Owl and Variable Wheatear. An added attraction is the Gangetic Dolphins which can be hard to view but is very possible in these waters.

Picnic lunch and evening walk along the river to view species like Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Sulphur-Bellied Warbler, Bar-headed Goose,

Temminck's Stint, Sand Lark, Desert Wheatear, Small Pranticole and Ruddy Shelduck. Return to the Lodge by evening. The lodge is a great spot to see the Indian Flying Fox (Indian Fruit bat) and Common Palm Civet. Dinner and overnight at the Chambal Safari Lodge.

#### Jan 23: Day 4: Agra / Bharatpur

Depart post breakfast for Agra. Spend the rest of day in Agra marveling at its many monuments, most famously the Taj Mahal. Post lunch, drive onwards to Bharatpur (1 hour away). We stay at the Birder's Inn – a small family run hotel walking distance from the park entrance. Overnight at Bharatpur.



A painted spur fowl

#### Jan 24: Day 5: Keoladeo Ghana National Park

Early morning visit to the National Park with a packed breakfast. Post breakfast drive to a spot outside the park to try and see the Greater Painted Snipe and Indian Courser. Lunch at the Lodge and evening into the park for more birding. Species today include Large-tailed Nightjars, Ashy Drongo, White-browed Fantail, Striated Heron, Black-rumped Flameback, Asian Open-bill, Black- necked Stork, Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Bar-headed Goose, Comb Ducks, Booted, Steppe and Greater Spotted Eagle, Common and Pied Kingfishers, Dusky Eagle-owl, Black Bittern ,Common Crane, White-tailed Lapwing, Dalmatian Pelicans, Lesser Whistling-duck , Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Marshall's Iora, Great Crested Grebe, Red-crested Pochards and Red Avadavats.

Back to Birders inn by evening. Dinner and Overnight at the inn.

### Jan 25: Day 6: Bharatpur / Ranthambhore

This morning, we'll put in one final birding session for species we've might have missed. More species to look out for are Birds to look out for are Oriental Darter, Little Grebe, Greylag Goose, Indian Spot Billed Duck, Purple Herons, Painted Stork, Northern Shoveler, Garganey, Common Teal, Graceful Prinia, Greater Coucal, Hume's and Greenish Warbler, Shikra, Indian Grey Hornbill and Siberian Rubythroat.

Post breakfast we'll drive down to the town of Sawai Modhopur the gateway to Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (approximately

4 hours) Arrive at the lodge for lunch and post lunch we head out for our very first jeep safari. Return to the lodge by sundown. Overnight at Dev Vilas in Ranthambhore.

Jan 26: Day 7: Ranthambhore



A tigress at a watering hole

Today we will spend most of our day inside the park to maximise our chances at seeing wildlife. Known for its rather photogenic tigers, Ranthambhore is also a great place to see leopard and Indian fox. The other mammals that can be seen are nilgai and chinkara, spotted and sambhar deer, grey and ruddy mongoose, rhesus and langur monkeys, hare and a great many birds. Jeep safaris in the morning and evening, each lasting 4 hours long. We will return to the lodge for meals. Overnight at Dev Vilas in Ranthambhore.

## Jan 27: Day 8: Ranthambhore / Delhi / Nainital

We leave early morning with a packed breakfast to board our train to Delhi. This air-condition seater train takes 5 hours and

promises us a nice view of the country side. Arrive in Delhi and we will proceed to a hotel for a wash, change and lunch. In the evening after dinner we will depart for Old Delhi station to board our overnight train to Kathgodam. Overnight on the Ranikhet Express train.

#### Jan 28: Day 9: Kathgodam / Nainital

Arrive early morning and transfer to Nainital, a drive of approximately 2 hours. Arrive and check into the Hotel. For the next two and a half days we bird around Pangot, Sattal and the Mangoli valley. The excursions would be by car and a great many walks. Species to look out for are Red-billed Blue Magpies, Black-headed & Eurasian Jays, Bronzed Drongo, Mountain Bulbul,



Khalij Pheasant

Blue-winged & Bar Throated Siva, Pink-browed Rosefinch, Spotwinged Grosbeaks, Blue-fronted Redstart, Scarlet Finch, Green-Backed Tit, Yellow-Browed Tit, Cheer Phesant, Koklas Phesant, Great Barbet, Grey-Backed Shrike, Eurasian Jay, Mistle Thrush, Orange-Flanked & Golden Bush Robin, White-Browed and Green Shrike-babbler, Rusty-Checked Scimitar Babbler, Chestnut Thrush, Rufous-Bellied Niltava, Mrs Gould's Sunbird, Lammergier, Himalayan Griffon, Collared Owlet, Chestnut-Eared Bunting, Small Niltava and Slaty-Blue Flycatcher. Overnight at the Naini Retreat in Nainital.

## Jan 29: Day 10: Nainital

Whole day birding at Pangot, Saattal and Kainchi. Overnight at the Naini Retreat in Nainital.

# Jan 30: Day 11: Nainital / Corbett Tiger Reserve Post breakfast we will check out of our hotel and drive to

Corbett Tiger Reserve via the Mangoli Valley. We will take and easy drive down and bird along the way. Arrive at The Himalayan Outback – a camp in the Ramganga valley on the periphery of the Reserve by evening for campfire and dinner. Overnight at THO Camp.

### Jan 31: Day 12: Corbett Tiger Reserve

A Whole day of birding in and around the camp and some other hot spots outside the park. Spend the morning exploring the surrounding forest and streams for species like Great Hornbill, Chestnut Headed and Grey Bellied Tesia, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Spotted & Slaty Backed Forktail, Long Billed Thrush, Brown Fish Owl, Collared Falconet, Snowy Browed Flycatcher, Red Billed Leothrix and Scaly breasted Wren Babbler Wall Creeper and Great Thick Knee.

Post lunch we drive to Kumeria. Species to look out for would be Tawny Fish Owl, Long Tailed Broadbill, Little Forktail, Maroon Oriole, Rufous Gorgeted Flycatcher, Slaty Blue Flycatcher, Silver Eared Mesia, Lesser Racquet Tailed Drongo, Black Chinned Yuhina, White Crested Laughing thrush, Small Niltava, Rufous Bellied Niltava, Brown Dipper, Bar Tailed Treecreeper and Chestnut Bellied and Velvet Fronted Nuthatch. Time permitting we will dive to a spot on the Kosi River to look for the Ibisbill. Back to THO Camp by sundown. Overnight.

# Feb 01: Day 13: Dhikala

Early morning, we will depart to the Dhikala range of the National park with a packed breakfast. Dhikala is one of the main tourist centre for Corbett therefore it has many restrictions, walking is prohibited in this zone except in designated areas. Our stay in Dhikala would involve game drives to observe the wildlife of the area. Birding in Dhikala is quite an attraction and species that can be observed here include Lesser Fish Eagle, Hodgson's Bushchat, Cinereous Vulture, Red-Headed Vulture, Slender-Billed Vulture, Tawny Fish Owl, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Pied Harrier, Black Francolin, Tawny Pipit, Crested Kingfisher, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Slaty Headed Parakeet, Emerald Dove and Jungle Bush Quail. Overnight at the forest rest house complex.

# Feb 02: Day 14: Dhikala / THO

We start the day with a jeep safari to your most favourite part of the area. Breakfast and lunch will be at the Forest Resthouse, after lunch we drive back to THO lodge.

We would drive past and visit High Bank, Champion Pool, Gharial Pool and the interpretation centre at Dhangari gate. Arrive at the lodge by evening.

At sundown we will have a campfire and dinner, which is leisurely and personal. Along with the excellent cuisine, your guide and hosts will amuse and amaze you with their stories of exciting experiences. Then it is time to relax once again and enjoy carefree banter by the fireside whilst feasting on the unique sounds and smells that your exclusive location offers, before retiring to



Corbett's main attraction



Elephant herd at Dhikala

bed. Overnight at The Himalayan Outback Camp.

Feb 🗱: Day 15: THO / Delhi

Post breakfast depart for Delhi by road. Arrive in Delhi in the evening and proceed to your onward destination.

Feb DY: Day 16: Nightfly home.



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