

Mountains, Marshes and Minivets



Birding in the North and West of India Dec 2015- Jan 2016

A three week tour that takes you across the north and west of India, into some of the best birding and wildlife hotspots in the country.

From grasslands and marshy salt flats to dry deciduous and scrub jungle in Gujarat, then to montane and mixed deciduous forests of Uttarakhand and finally to the wetlands of Bharatpur, 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	Early departure to Ahmedabad by air, then drive to Velavedar. Overnight at Velavedar
Day 3	Morning game drive at Velavedar then drive to Gir National park. Overnight at Gir.
Day 4	Gir National Park
Day 5	Gir to Bhuj. Overnight at Bhuj
Day 6 & 7	Two full days birding around Bhuj.
Day 8	Bhuj to Little Rann of Kutch. Overnight at Little Rann
Day 9	Full day to explore Little Rann of Kutch
Day 10	Little Rann of Kutch to Ahmedabad & Fly Delhi. Delhi to Kathgodam by overnight train.
Day 11	Arrive at Kathgodam then drive to Nainital. Overnight at Nainital.
Day 12	Full day's birding around Nainital
Day 13	Nainital to Corbett National Park. Birding at Mangoli Valley en route. Overnight at a resort in Corbett National Park.
Day 14	Whole days birding outside the national park.
Day 15	Early morning departure for Dhikala. Birding and wildlife viewing along the way. Overnight at Dhikala FRH.
Day 16	Full day at Dhikala then drive back to the resort. Overnight at a resort in Corbett National Park.
Day 17	Morning game drive into the park then afternoon birding. Evening departure to Delhi by the overnight train.
Day 18	Arrive at Delhi then train to Agra. Drive to Chambal. Overnight at the lodge.
Day 19	Whole day birding around Chambal.
Day 20	Drive to Agra, local sightseeing then onwards to Bharatpur. Overnight at a resort in Bharatpur.
Day 21	Whole day's birding in Bharatpur.
Day 22	Morning departure to Delhi by road. Late night connect to your flight back home.

Food and Accommodation

Delhi

Your first port of call and a hub you will cross many times during this trip, accommodation is in smart and contemporary small hotels or homestays. Your accommodation will have modern amenities and food here caters to international travellers.



Blackbuck in the scrub grasslands

furnished with natural materials and open out to an extended deck - An ideal place to sit and relax amongst nature.

Moving on to the Kutch district, we will be staying at the JP resort, Nakhatrana 50 kms. from the town of Bhuj. The resort blends modern and traditional with a lot of the décor in local “Kutchi” style. The Rann Riders camp in the Little Rann, Surrounded by wetlands, Rann Riders is an eco-friendly resort imaginatively designed using local materials to recreate the appearance of a village. Accommodations are in cottages, resembling the huts of the Bajania and Rabaris tribes, decorated with mirrors, mud-plaster work and embroideries. Each of the cottages has an a/c twin-bedroom, with a comfortable cane bed, a dry dressing area and a tiled bathroom with western-style toilet fittings and hot-and-cold showers. At all the locations in Gujarat, the food is wholesome and fresh. Fare is generally Indian with some continental dishes as well catering to western palettes. All places also serve local Gujarati or regional delicacies too. Gujarati cuisine is predominantly vegetarian and varies widely in flavour and heat depending on the region. It is characterized by being distinctively sweet, salty and spicy at the same time.

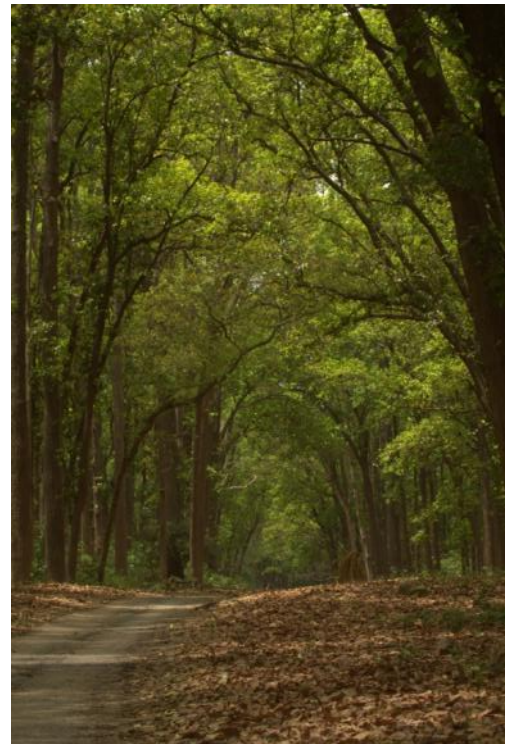
Corbett Tiger Reserve

Tiger Camp is located on the periphery of Corbett National Park surrounded by jungle on one side and river Kosi on the other. Tiger Camp offers air-conditioned cottages and rooms, each equipped with a double / twin bed, coffee table, chairs, clothes rack, air-conditioner etc. Each one has an attached western style toilet and a hot shower. Tiger camp has a common dining area which serves a buffet of Indian and continental food.

Gujarat

In the state Gujarat, where the majority of our tour takes place, we will be staying in a variety of accommodations from premium jungle lodges to tented camps. At Velavedar our first stop, we will be staying at the plush Blackbuck Lodge, situated in vast grassland bordering the sanctuary. There are only 14 cottages spread on 70 acres of land and a few common areas for guests. The cottages are adobe but come with all modern amenities.

At Gir, our next stop we will be staying at a luxury tented jungle camp. This eco-friendly camp has 21 Air Conditioned Luxury Tents each with large well-furnished bedrooms and an attached en-suite bathrooms. All the tents are beautifully



A forest road in Corbett

Dhikala Forest Resthouse 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. 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 wholesome, clean vegetarian food.

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.



Skimmers and Gharial on the sandbars

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 en-suite 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.

For more information on the hotels:

- 1) **Velavedar** : *The Blackbuck Lodge* – <http://www.theblackbucklodge.com/>
- 2) **Gir**: *Lion Safari Camp* - http://campsofindia.com/lion_safari_camp.php
- 3) **Bhuj**: *JP Resort* - <http://hoteljpkutch.com/>
- 4) **Little Rann of Kutch**: *Rann Riders* - <http://www.rannriders.com/>
- 5) **Corbett**: *Tiger Camp* - Tiger Camp: <http://www.tiger-camp.com/accommodation.html>
- 6) **Chambal**: *Chambal Safari Lodge* - <http://www.chambalsafari.com/>
- 7) **Bharatpur**: *The Birder's Inn* - <http://www.birdersinn.com/>

Geography and Natural History

Velavedar

The Blackbuck National park spread over 34.52 sq km area comprising of grasslands, shrub lands, saline plains and mud flats, which support a variety of grass, flowering plants, 14 species of mammals, over 140 species of birds and many reptiles. It is the only tropical grassland in India to be given the status of a national park. The Alang and Paravali Rivers, three artificial ponds, two check dams and nearby coastal marshes provide an ideal habitat for aquatic flora and fauna as well. Velavadar has India's largest population of Blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*), one of the fastest mammals in the world. India's largest antelope, the Nilgai or Blue Bull (*Bosephalus tragocamelus*), is also present as well as the endangered Indian Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*), the nocturnal Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*),



Blackbuck in the grasslands

Indian Fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*), Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*) and Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*). Smaller mammals like Indian Hare (*Lepus nigricollis*), Gerbil (*Tatera indica* and *Gerbillus gleadowi*), Indian Gray Mongoose (*Herpestes edwardsii*) and Indian Hedgehog (*Paraechinus micropus*) are also found.

Velavadar National Park and its nearby wetlands comprise an important Bird Area, notified by Birdlife International. The park is a good place to watch grassland birds like larks, bushchats, wheatears, sandgrouse, francolins and quails. The park's specialties include Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*) and Stolizka's Bushchat (*Saxicola macrorhynchus*). Magnificent eagles, falcons and

endangered vultures can be seen at Velavadar. In winter, Velavadar National Park hosts the world's largest harrier roost – Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*), Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) and Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) can be seen in large numbers, while Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) is occasionally spotted. The lakes and seasonal marshes are important places to watch the Lesser Floricans (*Sypheotides indicus*), pelicans, cranes, storks, ducks, herons and other water birds.

Gir

The Gir Forest National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1965, with a total area of 1412 sq. km. (about 258 sq. km. for the fully protected area (the national park) and 1153 sq. km. for the Sanctuary).

It is the sole home of the Asiatic Lions (*Panthera leo persica*) and is considered to be one of the most important protected areas in Asia due to its supported species. The forest area of Gir and its lions were declared as "protected" in the early 1900s by the Nawab of the princely state of Junagadh. This initiative assisted in the conservation of the lions whose population had plummeted to only 15 through slaughter for trophy hunting.



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A pride of Lions at Gir

Seven perennial rivers flow through the Gir region namely, Hiran, Shetrunji, Datardi, Shingoda, Machhundri, Godavari and Raval. There are four reservoirs of the area, one each on Hiran, Machhundri, Raval and Shingoda rivers, including the biggest reservoir in the area, the Kamleshwar Dam, dubbed 'the lifeline of Gir'. The forest is predominantly dry deciduous, grassland and scrub.

Gir accounts for about 38 species of mammals, around 300 species of birds, 37 species of reptiles and more than 2,000 species of insects. The carnivores group mainly comprises of Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*), Indian Leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*), Sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*), Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*), Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*), Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Indian Gray Mongoose (*Herpestes edwardsii*), Asian Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), Ratel (*Mellivora capensis*) and Rusty-spotted cat (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*). The main herbivores are Spotted Deer (*Axis axis*), Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), Four-horned Antelope (*Tetracerus quadricornis*), Chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*) and Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*). Blackbucks from the surrounding area are sometimes seen in the sanctuary. Among the smaller mammals, Indian Porcupine and Hare are common but the Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) is rare. Some of the charismatic reptiles are Marsh crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) Star Tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) Bengal Monitor Lizard (*Varanus bengalensis*), Indian Rock Pythons (*Python molorus*) and Spectacled Cobra (*Naja naja*).

The plentiful avifauna population has more than 300 species of birds, most of which are resident. The scavenger group of birds has 6 recorded species of Vultures. Some of the typical species of Gir include Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*), Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*), Changeable Hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*), Brown Fish Owl (*Bubo zeylonensis*), Indian Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bengalensis*), Rock Bush-Quail (*Perdicula argoondah*), Black-hooded Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*), Crested Treeswift (*Hemiprocne coronata*) and Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*).

Rann of Kutch

The Rann of Kutch is large area of salt marshes located in the western tip of Gujarat (primarily the Kutch district), India. Comprising of over 7,500 square kilometres it is reputed to be the largest salt desert in the world. It is divided into two main parts; Great Rann of Kutch and Little Rann of Kutch. The area is also spread across the Sindh province in Pakistan.



The vast open plains of the Rann

It is a seasonally marshy region alternating with elevated pieces of land where vegetation grows. The word *Rann* means desert in Hindi. The Rann of Kutch is the only large flooded grasslands region in the whole Indo-Malayan region of the planet. The fact that the area has desert on one side and the sea on the other provides the Rann of Kutch with a variety of ecosystems, including mangroves and desert vegetation. The grassland and deserts of the Rann of Kutch are home to forms of wildlife that have adapted to the often harsh conditions of this vast area. These include endemic and endangered animal and plant species. It is famous as the world's last refuge of the Indian Wild

Ass (*Equus hemionus khur*) for the conservation of which it has been declared as the Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary. Though a bleak landscape, it is rich in biodiversity and is an ecologically important area for wildlife and many local and migratory waterbirds like cranes, ducks, pelicans, flamingos and land birds like sandgrouse, francolin and the Indian bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*). It is also home to various unique mammals apart from wild ass such as the Indian Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*), Desert Fox (*Vulpes vulpes pusilla*) and Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*). The Chari-Dhand Wetland Conservation Reserve close to Natkhatrana town has an abundance of water during the monsoons and attracts birds to this unique wasteland. Thousands of flamingos (*Phoenicopiterus roseus* and *Phoenicopiterus minor*), Common cranes (*Grus grus*) and other wetland birds including hundreds of Painted storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) and Eurasian Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*) among others can be spotted here. The wetland also attracts Chinkara, Wolves, Caracal (*Caracal caracal*) and desert foxes besides endangered birds. Kutch Bustard Sanctuary is one of the two Great Indian Bustard sanctuaries in Gujarat.

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 north-eastern 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 (*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.

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 (*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 (*Nilssonina 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 scrofa*), 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.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival Delhi

Arrive at New Delhi Airport, where you will be met and taken to your hotel for the night. Overnight in a hotel close to the airport. (Hotel – to be announced)

Day 2: Delhi / Ahmedabad / Velavadar

Early morning you will be transferred to airport to board flight to Ahmedabad. From Ahmedabad, we will drive to Velavadar National Park, 3 hours away. Lunch will be at the lodge. Post lunch, we will visit the Park. We will have good opportunities to photograph Blackbuck sparring. Other notable mammals that we may encounter are the Indian Wolf, Striped Hyena, Jungle Cat, Golden Jackal and Indian Fox. Velavadar is a large roosting site of harriers, up to 2000 Montagu's and Pallid Harriers have been recorded here together at dusk, other birds here are the Rufous-tailed Lark, Greater Short-toed Lark, Ashy-crowned and Black-crowned Sparrow Lark, Indian Bushlark, Singing Bushlark, Crested Lark, Painted and Grey Francolin, Desert and Variable Wheatear, Chestnut Bellied Sandgrouse and Painted Sandgrouse. Overnight at the Blackbuck Lodge.



Jeep Safari in Velavadar

Flight: Indigo Airlines 6E 155 Delhi to Ahmedabad 07:10/08:40 hrs.
(Reporting time at airport for domestic flight is 1.5 hrs. before departure)

Day 3: Velavadar / Gir

We will head out for an early morning game drive into the park for more wildlife viewing. We will return to the lodge for a wash and change. Post lunch, we will drive to Sasan our next destination. The drive to Gir is about 220 kms. and will take approximately 5 hours.



A male Asiatic Lion

Overnight at the Lion Safari Camp.

Day 4: Gir

A day and a half to explore Gir, where we avail a total of 4 park drives each day to maximize our chances of wildlife viewing and birding. Best known for the last remaining population of Asiatic Lions, Gir is also one of the finest reserves to see Leopards. Some of the birds found here include the Indian Jungle Nightjar, Mottled Wood Owl, Rock Bush Quail, White-bellied Minivet, Painted Sandgrouse, Black Ibis, Rufous-fronted Prinia & Crested Hawk Eagle. Overnight at Lion Safari Camp



A Short-toed Snake Eagle

Day 5: Gir / Bhuj

Early morning, we will do one more game drive into Gir. Post breakfast we will depart for Bhuj. It will be a long drive but we will have some birding opportunities en route (430 kms / 9 hrs drive approx.)

Arrive at Nakhatrana in the evening and check in to JP resort. Overnight.

Day 6 & 7: Bhuj: We will spend two full days birding at Bhuj with short excursions to various hotspots. The main targets would include *Hypocolius*, Marshall's Iora, White-naped Tit, Sykes's Nightjar, Sykes's Lark, Grey-necked Bunting, White-bellied Minivet, Indian Eagle Owl, Crab Plover, Eurasian Oyster Catcher, Red-tailed & Desert Warbler. Other species we may see here are the Indian and the Cream coloured Courser, Chestnut bellied & Spotted Sandgrouse, Bhuj is a raptors paradise and our targets here include the Steppe Eagle and Imperial Eagle, Cinereous Vulture, Eurasian Griffon, Laggar and Saker Falcons. Both Tawny and Bonelli's Eagle breed here, while Red-necked Falcon is a specialty. Overnight at JP Resort.



Indian Courser

Day 8: Bhuj / Little Rann of Kutch

We will put in one more early morning birding session at Bhuj looking for species we may have missed out. Post breakfast we will drive out to the Little Rann of Kutch. The drive is about 325 kms and will take approximately 7 hours.

We will check into our camp and then do an evening game drive into the Wild Ass Sanctuary. Overnight at the Rann Riders Camp.

Day 9: Little Rann of Kutch

We will spend the whole day exploring the Little Rann of Kutch. We will do morning and evening visits the Wild Ass Sanctuary by exclusive jeeps, some of the other mammals we hope to see, besides the Wild Ass are the Desert Fox & Indian Wolf. The star birds here are the wintering McQueens Bustard, Sykes Nightjar, Greater Hoopoe Lark, Indian Courser, White tailed & Sociable Plovers, Great White & Dalmatian Pelicans, Demoiselle Cranes and raptors like the Pallid & Montagu's Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Imperial, Tawny & Greater Spotted Eagles. Overnight at Rann Riders.

Day 10: LRK / Ahmedabad / Delhi

Morning visit the sanctuary for the species we may have missed out

In the afternoon we will drive to Ahmedabad, 100 km. away to connect to our flight to Delhi. On arrival to Delhi we will transfer to a hotel for a wash and change and then catch out over night train to Kathgodam.

Flight: Jet Airways 9W-689 Ahmedabad to Delhi 02:30/ 04:00 hrs.

Train: Ranikhet Express 15013 Old Delhi to Kathgodam 22:35/0505 hrs (+1)

Day 11: 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



Spotted Forktail

Drongo, Mountain Bulbul, Blue-winged & Bar Throated Siva, Pink-browed Rosefinch, Spot-winged Grosbeaks, Blue-fronted Redstart, Scarlet Finch, Green-Backed Tit, Yellow-Browed Tit, Cheer Pheasant, Koklas Pheasant, 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 a hotel in Nainital for two nights. (Hotel – to be announced).

Day 12: Nainital

Whole day birding at Pangot, Saattal and Kainchi. Overnight at Nainital.

Day 13: 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 an easy drive down and bird along the way. Arrive at Tiger camp – a small lodge on the periphery of the Reserve by evening for campfire and dinner. Overnight at Tiger Camp.



A Pallas Fish Eagle



A Tiger on Safari



Black lored Tit

Day 14: Corbett Tiger Reserve

A Whole day of birding on the Kosi river and some other hot spots outside the park. Early morning a drive/walk to the banks of the Kosi River to look for the Ibisbill, Wall Creeper and Great Thick Knee.

Post lunch we drive north 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 Tree creeper and Chestnut Bellied and Velvet Fronted Nuthatch.

Spend the afternoon 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.

Back to Tiger Camp by sundown. Overnight.

Day 15 & 16: Dhikala

Early morning on the 15th, we will depart to the Dhikala range of the National park. Dhikala is 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 and short walks wherever possible. 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.

We will spend two full days at Dhikala and will return to Tiger Camp by the evening on day 16.

At Dhikala we will be staying at the forest rest house complex.

Day 17: Bijrani Range / Delhi

Early morning we will do one more game drive, this time into the Bijrani range of the National park. Fingers crossed for the elusive Bengal Tiger. Some bird species to look out

for here include Blue Throat, Scarlet Minivet, Black Hooded Oriole, Black Crested Bulbul, Zitting Cisticola, Striated Prinia, Crested Treeswift and Rufous Bellied Eagle. Evening birding on the periphery of the National park. Return to

the resort for a wash change and early dinner. Depart to Ramnagar railway station to connect to the overnight train to Delhi.

Train: Corbett park link Express 25014 Ramnagar to Delhi 22:00/4:40 hrs (+1)

Day 18: Delhi / Agra / Chambal

Arrive early morning on the overnight train from Kathgodam. Pick up from the railway station and drive to a homestay for wash and change. Post breakfast transfer to New Delhi station for train to Agra (appx 2 hours journey).

Arrive in Agra by late morning and transfer to the Chambal Safari Lodge (1.5 hrs drive). Bird in and around the lodge.

Post lunch we drive to the Sarus crane wetland area – exploring 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.

Day 19: Chambal

Early breakfast and depart for the National Chambal Safari. 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.

Day 20: Agra / Bharatpur

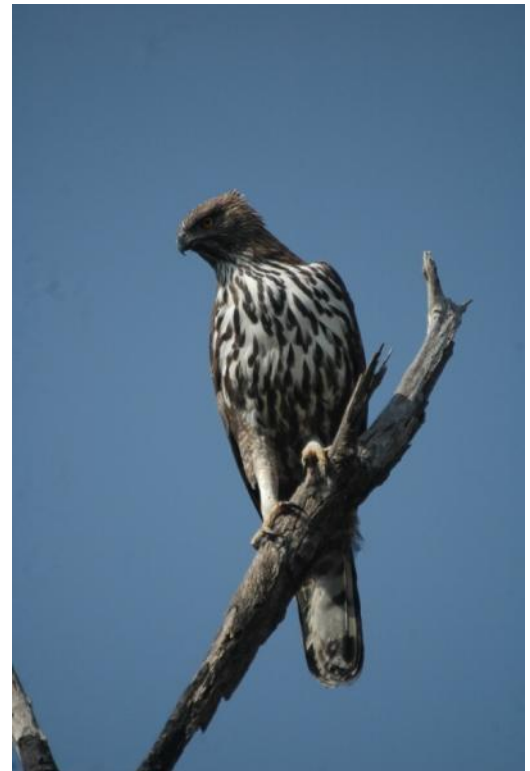
Depart post breakfast for Agra. Spend the rest of day in Agra marvelling at its many monuments, most famously the Taj Mahal. Post lunch, drive onwards to Bharatpur (1 hour away). We stay at the Birder's Inn – a small family run hotel walking distance from the park entrance. Overnight in Bharatpur.

Day 21: 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



Indian Skimmers



Changeable Hawk-Eagle



Little Pratincole

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 Lodge.

Day 22: Delhi / Departure

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 Delhi (approximately 3 hours) Arrive into Delhi by lunch. The evening is at leisure. Later in the night you will be transferred to the airport to connect onto your international flight back home.



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