



**BIRDING TOUR INDIA:
GENERAL INFORMATION**



*A well-recognized bird around the world, seeing **Indian Peafowl** in their native range is very special and they can be incredibly common in some areas with the males (known as “peacocks”) often looking spectacular!*

OUR INDIA BIRDING TOURS

We have designed seven incredibly exciting Indian birding tours that visit different parts of this megadiverse, huge, and varied country. The tours have been timed at the best times of the year for Indian birdwatching in each region and our tour offerings also include a special monsoon season tour.

Many of our Indian bird tours have been designed to also incorporate the vast array of Indian wildlife available in the country, such as **Bengal Tiger**, **Asiatic Lion**, **Greater One-horned (Indian) Rhinoceros**, **Red Panda**, **Asian Elephant**, **Gharial**, **King Cobra**, and more. We love our Indian bird tours and we are sure you will too. India offers some absolutely sensational birds and birdwatching, including a range of endemic bird species and families. Our Indian birdwatching tours offer great opportunities for several monotypic families for “family listers” and world-birders, such as **Crab-plover**, **Ibisbill**, **Wallcreeper**, **Spotted Elachura**, and **Grey Hypocolius**, as well as some world-rarities, such as **Forest Owlet**, **Great Indian Bustard**, **Bengal Florican**, **Lesser Florican**, **Sociable Plover**, **Bugun Liocichla**, and **Indian Spotted Creeper**. Birding in India is a thrilling experience, birds are often at high density in many places, allowing for good views of many species and individuals and good photographic opportunities in many cases too. India has many ancient religious and spectacular man-made sites, such as the world-famous Taj Mahal, and we make sure we include a visit on the tours that visit that area, because you can’t come to that part of the country and not visit the Taj Mahal! Indian food is varied and well-known around the world and we will sample a full range of local food on our tour.

A brief summary of each tour follows below:

1. **North India Birdwatching Tour**: Our most popular Indian bird tour, featuring **Bengal Tiger**, the **Taj Mahal**, and around 400 species of birds including **Indian Skimmer**, **Indian Courser**, **Ibisbill**, **Wallcreeper**, and **Spotted Forktail**.
2. **South India Birdwatching Tour**: An Indian birding tour filled with regional endemics (Western Ghat endemic birds and Nilgiri endemic birds) as well as over-wintering specialties. Highlights of this tour include **Malabar Trogon**, **Sri Lanka Bay Owl**, **Black-and-orange Flycatcher**, and **Kashmir Flycatcher**.
3. **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Birdwatching Tour**: A short Andaman Island endemic-focused tour, with targets including the huge **Andaman Woodpecker**, rare **Andaman Crake**, and the endemic owl quartet of **Andaman Masked Owl**, **Andaman Scops Owl**, **Hume’s Boobook**, and **Andaman Boobook**. Several endemic subspecies might also provide future “armchair” ticks.
4. **Northwest India Birdwatching Tour**: Covering the dry country, this tour focusses on some top birds, like **Crab-plover**, **Indian Courser**, **Sociable Plover**, **Asian Houbara** (Macqueen’s Bustard), **Indian Skimmer**, **Demoiselle Crane** (probably the best place in the world to see this species), **Grey Hypocolius**, **Marshall’s Iora**, **White-naped Tit**, and a list of raptors as long as your arm. **Asiatic Lion**, **Asiatic Wild Ass**, and **Indian Leopard** are all top Indian mammal targets.
5. **Western India Birdwatching Tour**: A short Indian bird tour targeting the restricted range endemic **Forest Owlet**, but with plenty of other great birds on offer, such as several Malabar endemic birds occurring at the northern limit of their ranges, such as **Malabar Trogon** and **Malabar Pied Hornbill**.

6. **Northeast India Birdwatching Tour:** This Indian birding tour spends time in the eastern Himalayas and opens the door to some of the best forested habitats in all of Asia. During this tour we can find top birds like **Temminck's Tragopan, Greater Adjutant, White-winged Duck, Ibisbill, Wallcreeper, Spotted Elachura, Bugun Liocichla, Beautiful Nuthatch, Ward's Trogon, and Fire-tailed Myzornis.** Mammals could include **Greater One-horned (Indian) Rhinoceros, Arunachal Macaque, Bengal Tiger, Red Panda, and Barasingha** (though some of these are very tough and would require a dose of luck!).
7. **India Monsoon Season Birdwatching Tour:** This tour visits Rajasthan during the monsoon season for a range of specialties not easy at other times of the year (and some still tough even at this time of year because they are so rare!). We will be looking for **Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican, Indian Pitta, Bristled Grassbird, Rain Quail, Green Avadavat, and Indian Spotted Creeper,** among others. We also have a chance of the gorgeous **Blackbuck** on this tour, as well as **Indian Leopard.**

The information contained herein refers to our Indian birding tours in general and should be useful reading for anyone joining any of the above tours, however, please also refer to the tour-specific information documents provided, for further information relating to each specific tour outlined above (these can be found on the website on each tour page under the “general information” tabs). If you have questions not answered in these documents, please [contact us](#).

We can also arrange private or custom Indian birdwatching tours, Indian mammal watching tours, regular city sightseeing and monument tours, bird and wildlife photography tours, or bird tours for specific species (for example if you would like to look for Western Tragopan, Snow Leopard, or Jerdon's Courser, please just [contact us](#) to request details and a quote).

ITINERARY AND SPECIES RECORDING (BIRD LISTS AND ANIMAL LISTS)

Ahead of each of our Indian birdwatching tours we will send you a detailed daily itinerary (along with arrival instructions). We will then provide you with a printed copy of the itinerary on the first day of the tour.

The printed copy of the itinerary will include a bird list, and list of other animals possible on the tour, and we will go through this each night (this is optional – though it is recommended and considered very useful). We always use the latest version of the [International Ornithological Committee \(IOC\)](#) taxonomy for our bird list and, for all other wildlife, we use the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) taxonomy. While birding during the tour we will create [eBird checklists](#) and these will be shared with any participant who wishes to have a copy. Please just provide us with your eBird user details at the [beginning](#) of the tour for us to do this.

Each evening, we will go through the itinerary and plans for the following day, to give you any specific information to be aware of (like what clothes and equipment will be needed, when we will be having breakfast, departure time from the hotel, and any important birds we will be looking for, etc.). This is a good time for you to ask us any questions you may have for the day ahead, to help with your preparation.

After the completion of the tour, we will email you a PDF copy of an illustrated trip report. This will include a complete IOC and IUCN checklist of all wildlife recorded during the tour. Any interesting bird, animal, or landscape photographs will be included in the trip report and will also

be added to our tour-specific [Flickr pages](#) as a reminder, and you are able to download these for free and share with your friends and family.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

You will be met at the airport at the start of the tour by our local representative (who will have a sign with your name showing), they will take you to where you need to be, which is usually a nearby hotel, for our meeting point.

Note that at the end of the tour, we recommend you get to the airport for your international flight at least three hours before your departure time since there is a lot of red tape to navigate and it can take quite a while to get through the check-in process, immigration, and security etc. There should not be any departure tax to be paid at the airport, this should be included in your outbound ticket price, but it is worth checking this with your airline to avoid any unexpected problems.

Our Indian tours are all quite different, so please refer to the tour-specific information for details on what to expect from each one.

PASSPORT, VISA, LOCAL LAWS, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, AND CUSTOMS

In order to visit India most visitors will require a visa. The exact requirements will depend on your nationality and so we recommend that you consult with your own government on their understanding of the rules and regulations. Make sure you apply for the correct type of visa for the purpose of your travel and the duration of your visit (as it varies). Penalties for having the wrong visa can include refusal of entry or deportation. This may also include not being allowed to enter India in the future. Please make sure your passport is valid for at least six months after your date of arrival into India. Your passport must also have two blank pages for your visa.

For the latest information, we recommend you check the following websites (note that it's not uncommon for these websites to go down, crash, have maintenance work underway etc., so worth checking early, with plenty of time to spare):

1. [E-FRRO](#) online portal (which is part of the Indian Foreigners Registration Office).
2. [Bureau of Indian Immigration \(BOI\)](#) website.
3. [Indian Ministry of External Affairs](#) website.

In order to apply for your visa, we recommend checking the [Bureau of Indian Immigration](#) website (bullet point #2 above) to see if you are best suited to apply for a regular (paper) visa or an e-visa. We recommend you consult the FAQs regarding restrictions on airports and seaports for your point of entry/departure. Allow plenty of time for your visa application to be processed. Please note that if you are of Pakistani origin, the visa application processing time will be substantially longer than for other visa applications. Overstaying your visa duration in India is an offence. Make sure you leave the country before your visa expires or get an official extension if needed. In the case of a medical emergency, it may be possible to extend your visa or convert your visa to a Medical Visa.

Please note that when visiting some parts of India additional permits (such as a Restricted Area Permit) will be required. Our local team will help with the procurement of these. Please refer to

each tour-specific information document for further information. In order to apply for the various permits, we will likely require a copy of your passport (e.g. a scanned or photographed copy) to get the process started. It is therefore important that if you need to change or update your passport, that this is done with plenty of time ahead of the tour. Please also note that some permits will only be obtained on arrival at the destination.

Passports should be kept on your person for safety and ease of use throughout the tour. You will frequently need to show passports and give passport details at most accommodation we visit, trains we use, and at national park entrance gates (as well as at other unpredictable times). Please also bring photocopies/digital (e.g. scanned) copies of key documents that can act as a backup in case of loss or damage to originals. If you book onto an Indian birding tour and provide your information and then your passport changes before your trip, you must let us know as soon as possible, so that we can update the details on the national park and train tickets. Failure to do so could result in difficulties on arrival at parks or train stations. There are strict rules about goods you can take into or out of India, with details [here](#).

On arrival into the country, you will likely have to show evidence of your ticket to leave after your Indian birdwatching holiday. Please make sure that you have all the required documents.

While we have not, as yet, had any issues with any clients joining our Indian tours, it is worth noting that you may need prior permission from the Indian authorities to bring equipment like listening or recording devices, radio transmitters, powerful cameras, or binoculars into India. It is worth noting that possessing and/or operating a satellite phone is illegal without a license in India. There are a great many birdwatchers and photographers residing in, and travelling to, India these days, and we are not aware of any recent issues with people coming into the country with optical equipment. Activities involving cameras and binoculars, like photography, birdwatching, (or plane spotting), may be misunderstood. Be particularly careful near military sites, government buildings, airports, and railway stations. Never look at or photograph any of these sites through optics or cameras.

Please note that there are strict restrictions on bringing Indian Rupees into India (see also the “Money” section below). Visitors to India, including residents and tourists, should follow the Reserve Bank of India guidelines [here](#). If you are visiting India, you can bring cash, travelers’ checks (traveler’s cheques) (in British Pounds Sterling (GBP), United States Dollar (USD\$), or another foreign currency) or a bank card with you and exchange or withdraw rupees once in India. Note that you must declare any amount above 5,000 US dollars in notes, or 10,000 US dollars in notes and travelers’ cheques combined.

Women traveling in India should respect local customs and dress codes. Laws on alcohol, including buying, drinking, and the legal drinking age vary by state. Our local guide will be able to inform you of the situation. It is an offence to drink alcohol in public places. There is often a ban on the sale of alcohol during major religious festivals, national holidays, and elections. The consumption, production, or transportation of alcohol is banned in several areas (some of which we visit on some of our tours, and include Bihar, Gujarat, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, and the region of Lakshadweep). If you drink or possess alcohol in these states, you could be arrested without bail. Conviction can carry a prison sentence of 5 to 10 years.

Smoking is banned in most public places. You should only smoke in designated smoking areas. E-cigarettes and related products are banned. You will neither be able to buy e-cigarettes in India, nor bring them into the country.

There are strong currents off many coasts. Most beaches do not have warning signs, flags, or lifesaving equipment. Take local advice and follow warnings and instructions issued by lifeguards. Emergency service standards may differ from those in the UK, US, Australia etc.

Please also refer to the “Crime and Safety” section below, and any additional information contained within the tour-specific information documents.

LGBTQ+ TRAVELERS

Same-sex relationships are legal in India. However same-sex marriage is still illegal. Indian society remains conservative. This includes attitudes to LGBTQ+ people, which can be less accepting than in the UK, USA, or some other countries, for example. There is a risk of harassment and discrimination, especially outside of big cities. Showing affection in public can receive unwanted attention.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

As detailed in our standard Terms and Conditions, we strongly encourage you to have comprehensive trip cancellation insurance to protect against unexpected events that might cause delays and interruptions to travel. It is important that the insurance covers illness, medical issues, accidents, repatriation, loss of luggage or any valuable items that you might be bringing (e.g. optical, camera, computer equipment etc.).

HEALTH, VACCINATIONS, AND PESTS

We recommend that you consult your doctor or local travel clinic regarding vaccine requirements approximately two months prior to your bird tour to India, so that any required vaccine courses can be completed in plenty of time for your departure. Please also refer to the tour-specific information documents, since recommendations may differ from the general information provided here.

There is no risk of Yellow Fever in India, nevertheless, there is a certificate requirement for travelers arriving from countries with a risk of Yellow Fever transmission, or having transited for more than 12 hours through such a country. The certificate for Yellow Fever is now valid for life, no longer only 10 years, as was considered to apply pre-2016. Please refer to the World Health Organization’s list of countries where Yellow Fever transmission is possible, [here](#).

Everyone visiting India should be up to date with standard vaccinations and boosters, like Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis, Chickenpox (Varicella), Seasonal Flu, Covid-19, Polio, Shingles, and Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR). Other vaccinations that might be required (depending on your personal situation, and to be confirmed by your travel clinic/doctor), include Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Japanese Encephalitis, Cholera, Typhoid, and Rabies.

Airborne and droplet transmitted diseases, such as Tuberculosis (TB), Avian/Bird Flu, Seasonal Flu, and Hantavirus, all occur and need to be considered. As does Antimicrobial resistant Ringworm.

There is a risk of insect- or tick-borne diseases in some parts of India. These include diseases like

Chikungunya, Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever, Leishmaniasis, Scrub Typhus (from Chiggers) and West Nile Virus. There is a low risk of Malaria across much of India (including most places that we visit on our Indian bird tours), the risk in some areas is higher than in others. Malaria is a serious illness caused by a parasite called Plasmodium infecting red blood cells. The disease is transmitted by mosquitos which predominantly feed between dusk and dawn. We do recommend that you check with your travel clinic and, if required, that you seek the recommended antimalarials (likely to include some combination of Atovaquone/Proguanil, Doxycycline, and Mefloquine). Please also refer to the tour-specific information. There is also a risk of Dengue and Zika Virus (both from diurnal mosquitos).

To prevent mosquito bites, we recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, treat clothes with repellents like permethrin or use permethrin-treated clothing (such as Buzz Off), and use an EPA-registered mosquito repellent containing DEET.

Please refer to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) website [here](#), for further information on vaccines and how to stay healthy on our Indian tours. Another great source of data is the “[Travel Health Pro](#)” website, and information on India can be seen [here](#). All three linked webpages, and any others from your home government, are worth studying ahead of joining our tour.

Poor air quality is a significant public health problem in many parts of the world, and we are likely to experience areas of poor air quality, usually when in – but not limited to – cities, particularly in – but not limited to – New Delhi and Mumbai. Exposure to high levels of air pollution over short time periods (e.g. minutes/hours/days) is linked to many different acute and chronic health problems. These effects are mainly on the respiratory (lungs and airways) and cardiovascular (heart function and blood circulation) systems. If you have pre-existing respiratory issues, it is worth consulting your doctor before your tour to advise on inhalers or other precautions.

Tap water is not potable in India. You should not drink water from taps at any time, since you can get ill (e.g. traveler’s diarrhea or worse), this would certainly ruin a portion of your bird tour. On all our India tours, we will provide two (usually 500 milliliters) bottles of mineral water per person per day from our tour vehicle supply. Please also bring a refillable water bottle to maintain your own supply. Water obtained from the hotel (excluding any free water provided) will be at your own cost (e.g. water from the restaurant, water from a mini bar etc.). There is a risk of Leptospirosis in India.

If you get any scratches from plants (see the “Dangerous Animals and Plants” section below) or receive any bites from insects or anything else, they should be cleaned, treated with antiseptic cream/wipes, and covered quickly to reduce any chance of infection.

Sunscreen (rated SPF 30+) should be used frequently, a sunhat should be worn to protect from the sun’s powerful rays, and sunglasses used to help prevent glare. A plentiful intake of water is essential to maintain hydration.

There is a risk of altitude sickness when travelling to elevations of 8,200 feet (2,500 meters) and above. Some of our tours will spend time above this elevation, please refer to tour-specific information documents for specifics.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

It is essential that you are suitably covered with comprehensive medical insurance in the event of any emergency situation while on our India bird tours. Medical facilities in India are generally significantly inferior to what you are used to at home. Emergency medical treatment outside main cities is not readily available and you may have to be taken to New Delhi or Mumbai for treatment. Treatment in private hospitals can be expensive and the options for repatriation to your home or a neighboring country in an emergency are limited and very expensive. If you don't have insurance, the cost for medical care is likely to be very high and you may be refused treatment until you have paid fully, in advance, which can be very stressful and very difficult at times.

As detailed in our standard Terms and Conditions, we require you to tell us when signing up for our Indian birdwatching tours of any medical conditions that we should be aware of. Please tell us if you have any walking/mobility (including stability) issues, diabetes, epilepsy, food and medicinal allergies, heart conditions, and long-term illnesses etc. This will make things easier for us, and you, in case an unexpected situation arises.

CRIME AND SAFETY

Most local people we meet on our Indian tours are kind and friendly. Nevertheless, India is a huge country with an absolutely massive population of 1.417 billion people and is not exempt from the issues that most developing countries face, especially with the many different religions and ideologies present.

There is a real threat of terrorist attack globally, directed against UK, US, and other western national interests. This includes groups and individuals who view nationals of these countries as targets. You should remain vigilant at all times.

There is a heightened risk of terrorism in some Indian regions, attacks could be indiscriminate, and can occur in places such as major hotels, transportation hubs (e.g. railway stations and airports), restaurants, bars, markets, places of worship, etc. Additional care should be taken during periods of national or religious significance, such as Republic Day (26th January), Independence Day (15th August), Diwali (usually in October or November), and Eid (date changes each year).

Strikes, political rallies and demonstrations occur frequently and sometimes become violent and cause transportation delays. The risks are higher during elections. Curfews and restrictions may be put in place at short notice. Transport and public services, including mobile and internet network coverage, may be disrupted at short notice. Avoid protests and similar events while in India.

Be cautious in tourist areas, where scammers, pickpockets, and ticket touts target foreigners. Take particular care of your possessions on buses, trains, at airports, and in crowds. Criminals may ride past on motorbikes and snatch valuables.

Sexual assaults occur. This includes attacks on foreign female visitors in tourist areas and cities. Avoid isolated areas, including beaches, when alone at any time of day. We strongly recommend that no female visitor walks around on her own before, during, or after the tour. Please ensure that you are accompanied by our tour leader or local guide, and make sure you lock your room at

all times, while you are inside the room and when you are not in the room. Please refer to the advice provided by the UK government [here](#), for women travelling abroad which is relevant whatever your nationality. Your own government might also have similar guidance on their Indian travel advice website, which will also be worth reading.

The following hazards exist throughout the year, especially above 9,845 feet (3,000 meters): altitude sickness, sudden weather changes, including thunderstorms, avalanches and snow drifts, landslides, flooding, and rock falls. Make sure your insurance policy covers you for altitudes over 7,875 feet (2,400 meters), and mountain rescue and helicopter costs. Note that there are no commercial mountain rescue services operating above 9,845 feet (3,000 meters). In some border areas, only the Indian Air Force can carry out air rescues, they are under no obligation to perform them and only carry out rescues during working hours.

DANGEROUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Some wildlife in India can be dangerous. If in doubt, follow advice from our local guides or the Birding Ecotours India tour leader. Wild **Asian Elephants** and **Mugger** (crocodiles) will attack humans on occasion. **Indian Leopards**, **Bengal Tigers**, **Asiatic Lions** and **Greater One-horned** (Indian) **Rhinoceroses** are all potentially present on some of our tours, but we will likely be in vehicles if we are lucky enough to find any of these shy apex predators or giant herbivores. Note that when we are staying in certain areas on some tours, the wildlife sometimes comes right next to our rooms, so care does need to be taken at all times (particularly at night). In places where seriously dangerous animals occur, such as **Asian Elephants**, **Bengal Tigers**, and **Indian Leopards**, we are usually restricted to our vehicles. Some national parks (e.g. Corbett National Park, which we visit on our [Northern India bird tour](#)) have “safe areas” that are protected by an electric fence, and you are free to walk around in these areas. In other areas, such as at Ranthambore National Park (also visited on our [Northern India birdwatching tour](#)) you are prohibited from leaving the vehicle within the national park. Make sure you go to the toilet prior to leaving on a tiger safari, as you won't be allowed out of the vehicle until we are back in a safe zone!

Venomous snakes (e.g. **King Cobra**) are found in many parts of the country, and we are more likely to come into closer contact with some of these than the species mentioned above. **Feral dogs** are common and sometimes carry rabies, as can macaques (a type of monkey), which can be quite aggressive in some situations and at some locations (usually where they have become accustomed to being fed by humans – please do not feed the monkeys or any other animals).

Insects (including mosquitos) are prevalent in some places we visit on our tours, and some of these can bite or sting (as can other small creatures), so care should be taken about where you place your hands and feet (check shoes/boots before putting them on etc.). **Leeches** can be present in some areas of the country and may be encountered on your India birding tour! They are an annoyance rather than being a real health issue, though we know no one likes them! We recommend using an insect repellent (particularly citronella) sprayed on shoes and ankles to help keep unwanted attention from biting pests away. DEET containing products usually work well too.

There are numerous poisonous and irritant plants in India, some plants may be protected by giant sharp spikes, and so we recommend being careful about where you put your hands if moving

through vegetation (this is also a good way to reduce insect bites).

While we do try and stay on trails/paths as much as possible, there may be times when we venture off a marked trail for a particular reason, such as a roosting nightbird, a nesting bird, or something that just won't come to the trail etc. It is at times like these that extra care about where you step and place your hands is important.

FOOD, DRINKS, AND MEALS

Many typical Indian foods can be expected on our Indian bird tours, with some western menu options likely in some places. Vegetarian food is commonly available, but please let us know any dietary requirements ahead of the tour. Most meals are based around chicken or fish, with rice, breads, and vegetables. Fresh fruit will be available. Due to the lack of refrigeration, dairy products are not common.

In some regions, Indian food can be quite spicy, so if you don't like spicy food, please let us know so we can inform our hosts in advance. On most of our tours we will have breakfasts at our hotels (after an early morning birding session in some cases). Lunches will be taken in our hotels, at restaurants as we travel, or occasionally as boxed/packed lunches in the field while birding. Evening meals will usually be taken at our hotels. We suggest you bring your favorite snacks or protein bars to supplement your diet. Indian street food is not recommended for travelers, due to the risk of getting sick, despite how good it often smells.

Tap water is not potable in India, you should not drink water from taps because you can get sick. Tea and coffee are widely available, however, if you have strong preferences about your tea/coffee, you are advised to bring your own. Alcoholic drinks are available in most places, although the sale of alcoholic drinks is banned (or at least not usually available) on religious holidays. Drinking alcoholic drinks in certain public areas is illegal. Please refer to the tour-specific documents.

While Indian food can be delicious, upset stomachs are fairly common as a result of the big change in diet and food preparation styles. The cause of upset stomachs is often the result of undercooked food (particularly chicken), unsanitary food preparation standards, or the use of unclean water, which may enter your body directly if you drink it, or if uncooked food is washed in it and then eaten. We recommend that you do not eat salad or fruit needing to be washed (unless you wash it yourself with bottled water).

CURRENCY AND MONEY

The Indian Rupee (INR) is the official currency of India. It is subdivided into 100 paise. Banknotes can be found in the following denominations: INR 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500. Coins are used for INR 1, 2, 5, 10, and 20.

The Indian Rupee is a closed currency, which means it is not available to buy or sell outside of India. It is likely best to buy Indian Rupees at the airport after your arrival in the country, or use an ATM at the airport to draw cash. Note that ATMs, even in major cities/airports, often do not function correctly, making withdrawal of cash difficult at times. On most of our Indian bird tours we will pass through towns, cities, or airports that should have ATMs. Nevertheless, we recommend getting any cash needed as soon as you arrive in India, in case future opportunities

don't work out, such as if the ATM is broken or has run out of cash to dispense. Most ATMs only allow a maximum withdrawal of INR 10,000 in one go. Bank charges may apply.

Cash is extremely useful for incidental purchases in rural areas, where cards may not be accepted, and for tipping. We recommend trying to get hold of small denomination notes/coins for tipping, but getting small notes is not always easy.

TIPPING

It is expected to tip practically everyone who provides any form of service in India, so try and get as many small notes as possible as early as possible in your trip (but this is not always easy!). The following is a guide, and if you feel like a service provided was better/worse than expected, you can adjust accordingly. Note, the examples of tips below are per group (2-4 persons) and not per traveler and are in Indian Rupee (INR). Nature Guide (full day) INR 750-1,250, Jeep Guide (3-5 hours) INR 200-300, Monument Guide (full day) INR 500-1,000, Monument Guide (half day) INR 300-500, Driver INR 500-1,000 per day, hotel porters INR 50 per bag per porter (extra if lots of heavy bags), hotel staff (e.g. two to three nights duration of stay) usually INR 250 per room per night as a consolidated amount to be put into the box or handed to the hotel manager to share among their staff, hotel greeting staff INR 50-100 for car door opening at plush hotels, railway porters (pay them only once they have shown you to your seat and carried your bags into the carriage) expect around INR 100 per bag but agree about the price in advance, and rickshaw guides (which we use on some of our tours, such as a Bharatpur on our [Northern India birding tour](#)) INR 500-750 per day.

Visitors to India should follow the Reserve Bank of India guidelines [here](#). If you are visiting India, you can bring cash, travelers' checks (traveler's cheques) (in British Pounds Sterling (GBP), United States Dollar (USD\$), or another foreign currency) or a bank card with you and exchange or withdraw rupees once in India. Note that you must declare any amount above 5,000 US dollars in notes, or 10,000 US dollars in notes and travelers' cheques combined. Please note that if you are caught bringing money into India, or taking it out, it is highly likely to be confiscated.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation on our Indian birding tours is generally of a good standard, however the standard is usually lower than what you would expect from a developed country. Our Indian tours are all quite different and, as such, the accommodation does vary across them, so please refer to the tour-specific information documents for each tour for full details. Note that we do try and stay in the best accommodation possible, close to the best birding sites that we visit.

ELECTRICITY

In India the power plugs and sockets (outlets) are of Type C, Type D, and Type M. The standard voltage is 230 volts (V), and the standard frequency is 50 hertz (Hz). Further details and photos of these plugs and sockets, and information on the electricity supply in India, can be found [here](#). This [link](#) allows you to type in your home country into the website and it will tell you if you will need to bring a travel adaptor and/or a voltage converter, as well as telling you if you need to

consider frequency differences. Please check the tour-specific information documents where, if electricity supply is likely to be an issue, we will let you know.

COMMUNICATIONS

The phone signal in India is usually reasonably good. Airtel is one of the best performing local networks across the country. It is possible to purchase a local SIM card on arrival in India and usually simply done at the airport. Most places we stay during our Indian birdwatching tours have Wi-Fi, but not all locations on all tours, so please refer to the tour-specific information documents.

TRANSPORTATION

We will use a variety of transportation on our India birding tours, ranging from air-conditioned minibuses and vans to open-top “safari” jeeps. Roads in India can be rough, and driving can be hazardous. We recommend you wear a seatbelt at all times (when available – some older safari-type vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts and are generally used for driving around inside national parks). The jeep drives can sometimes be rough and dusty. Some tours may require long drives, and on some tours we will make journeys by train, since this offers a good way to get around. Please refer to the tour-specific information documents for further details.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

Our Indian bird tours do not have domestic flights. Nevertheless, it is likely that you will take domestic flights to get from international arrival hubs (such as New Delhi, Mumbai, etc.) to regional airports, from where the specific tour will commence. Please refer to tour-specific details for start and end points of each tour. Please also refer to domestic airline weight restrictions for hold and hand luggage (which may vary per airline). If you need help with booking flights in India, please [contact us](#) and we will be able to help.

WEATHER/CLIMATE

India is a huge country, so conditions are very different across the range of Indian birding tours we offer. India can experience extreme weather events that may be hazardous to life and disrupt infrastructure, including buildings, roads, and communications. Please refer to the tour-specific information for details on each tour.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Tropical cyclones and monsoon rains can cause flooding in many places in India. The highest risk for monsoons is June to October (our [India Monsoon birding tour](#) is timed for August), the highest risk for cyclones and tropical storms is September to December (east coast of India), April to June and September to December (Bay of Bengal), and June to November (South India). Several parts of India lie on highly active fault zones (including areas of the North and North-east). The most active are along the length of the Himalayas. Earth tremors are common in these

regions and can cause landslides. Limited emergency response vehicles, equipment, and medical facilities could worsen the impact an earthquake has.

LUGGAGE

Please pack as light as possible for your Indian bird tour. A medium, soft-sided, and robust duffle bag is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles. We recommend a daypack be used to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle, or when birding in the field. Please be aware of any weight restrictions in place for any domestic/connecting flights you might be required to take as part of your journey.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND RELATED ITEMS

In general terms we recommend that you bring a selection of loose and lightweight field clothing with green, brown, or dark colors, as these work best for forest birding (which we will be doing for the majority of our Indian bird tours). Please avoid bright/pale colors, for example no white, red, orange etc. outer clothing layers during birding/wildlife watching time. Casual and informal dress is appropriate for the hotels/accommodation we use across our Indian tours.

We highly recommend trousers/long pants and long-sleeved shirts (these can be rolled up should you get too hot) for all birding activities, given the potential leech and insect issues (and the strong tropical sun) likely on most tours. A selection of clothes is useful as you are likely to get hot and sweaty in some locations. You should also bring some warmer clothes as on several tours we will spend some time birding at higher elevations, where nighttime temperatures could drop, and still be cool when we are birding or driving in open-top jeeps.

Rain is always a possibility in India (though this varies per tour), so light rain gear (including a small umbrella) is always worth having in your daypack. Leeches also enjoy damp conditions, and leech socks are advisable for some tours.

There are some opportunities for swimming on some tours, so swimwear might be useful should you wish to enjoy a swimming pool break. Sunglasses, sunhat, and sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) are considered essential.

Lightweight walking boots are recommended for the tours as they give extra ankle support while walking (necessary given some of the trails we will be birding on) and added protection against animal stings/bites. A pair of sandals (flipflops) or sneakers/trainers (tennis shoes) can be useful for when in vehicles and when walking between your room and restaurant in the hotels.

Please refer to the tour-specific information documents for further details. Our tours visit very different regions of India, where different clothing items will be recommended.

LAUNDRY

Laundry services are generally available on all tours, at most accommodation we use, and is often a good value and quick service.

WHAT TO BRING: OTHER ITEMS

Do not forget: Binoculars, camera, field guide (see “Books” section below), flashlight (torch), spare batteries, power bank, converter plugs, plug adaptors, chargers, prescription drugs (please bring the generic names for these drugs with you), toiletries, prescription glasses (and a spare pair), insect repellent, sunscreen, sunglasses, alarm clock, money pouch, hiking poles/walking sticks, suggested medical kit (see [here](#)), water bottle, and daypack.

Our tour leader/local guide will have a communal telescope for use during the tour. A scope can be useful on some of our Indian birding tours. If you do have a scope, it may be helpful to bring it along (please discuss this with us, as it does vary by tour and on some tours too many scopes will become a hindrance). The communal scope will allow everyone opportunities to look at birds briefly on a rotation basis. If you like to take “digi-scoped/phone-scoped” photos, or you would like to take prolonged scope views of the birds, please bring your own scope for that, the communal scope will be for everyone to look at the birds/wildlife, but not for personal photography.

Some additional items to remember to bring include important travel documents, passport, ATM/credit cards to withdraw cash, proof of vaccinations, and your travel or health insurance cards – photocopies (and digital copies) of all can be carried by the tour leader in case of emergency.

We recommend bringing a couple of different colored pens, along with a 12-inch/30-centimeter plastic ruler, these can make the checklist session easier to follow.

Face masks or face coverings are useful for when in open-topped vehicles, to keep dust out of your ears, nose, and mouth.

A hiking pole or walking stick is useful to help on the tracks and trails. A walking stick is compulsory for anyone who is unsteady walking, as we feel this is a safety issue; we don’t want anyone slipping on the trails or anywhere else.

A dry bag will be useful for optics and important documentation in case of rain, and this can also be good for keeping dust off items when in open-top jeeps.

Please refer to the tour-specific information documents for further details. Our tours visit very different regions of India, and some might require different items to those outlined above.

LANGUAGE

India has two official languages, Hindi and English. Most people have some knowledge of English.

MONUMENT VISITS

The entrance fees for monument visits are usually not included in the tour price and are to be paid on arrival at the monument. Please refer to tour-specific information.

PHOTOGRAPHY FEES

Please note that some national parks (or smaller parks/bird reserves) may charge a “camera fee” in addition to the entrance fee. Entrance fees are included in the tour prices, but camera fees are not, as this generally varies depending on the type of camera (still/video) you’ve got, and the size of the lens. These fees will need to be paid directly in local currency.

GENERAL USEFUL INFORMATION AND TIPS

Take a toilet roll from the first hotel with you, for roadside/emergency stops; there are plenty of toilets at gas stations, but most are basic with no toilet roll.

Take a bottle of hand sanitizer and use after shaking people's hands and touching money, doors, taps etc., and use it before eating. General hygiene and sanitation levels in India are much lower than in most of the rest of the world, and it is very easy to get sick from germs picked up on your hands.

Never drink any water coming out of taps. Only drink bottled water or purified water. You will be provided with a couple of bottles of water by your local guide each day. Note that sometimes hotels will provide a couple of bottles of water for free, but sometimes additional bottles will be charged for, so just be sure what is or isn't included by discussing it with the hotel to avoid unexpected and unwanted additional charges.

BOOKS

Helm Field Guides: Birds of India – Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp, and Tim Inskipp (2012), Helm. We recommend this paperback for all of our India birdwatching tours.

Please take a look at our recommended [field guide blog](#) for additional information on this region.

Some of the other bird books relevant to Sri Lanka include:

Helm Field Guides: Birds of Southern India – Richard Grimmett and Tim Inskipp (2005), Helm.

Field Guide: Birds of India – Amitava Majumder, Gopinathan Maheswaran, Imran Alam, Kailash Chandra, J.R.B. Alfred, and Biswajit Roy Choudhury, (2022). Zoological Survey of India.

Common Birds of Central India – Fergus Mark Anthony and Garima Tiwari (2022). Abhijeet Publications.

A Naturalist’s Guide to the Birds of India: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – Bikram Grewal and Garima Bhatia (2022). John Beaufoy Publishing.

Birds of Andaman and Nicobar Islands – Chandrakasan Sivaperuman, G. Gokularkrishnan, J. Dinesh, and P.T. Rajan (2016). Zoological Survey of India.

Waders of the Indian Subcontinent – Harkirat Singh Sangha (2021). Harkirat Singh Sangha (privately published).

Great Indian Bustard: A Pictorial Life History – Asad R. Rahmani, Devesh Gadhavi, and Kedar Gore (2016). The Corbett Foundation.

Ducks, Geese, and Swans of India: Their Status and Distribution – Asad R. Rahmani and Zafar-ul M. Islam (2009). Oxford University Press India.

The National and State Birds of India and Their Conservation Status – Madhab Chandra Dash (2019). The Readers Paradise.

Among the Birds of India: A Photographic Guide – Including Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh – Amano Samarpan (2019). Wisdom Tree.

Other specific-interest books, such as those covering reptiles, mammals, and other aspects of natural history, etc.:

A Photographic Guide to the Wildlife of India – Bikram Grewal, Tripta Sood, and Manjula Mathur (2022). John Beaufoy Publishing.

Photographic Field Guide Wildlife of Central India – David Raju and Surya Ramachandran (2016). Notion Press.

Endemic Fauna of Andaman and Nicobar Islands – Dodla Venkateswara Rao, Kailash Chandra, and Kamla Devi (2017). Zoological Society of India.

Wildlife Sanctuaries of India – Sanjay Bhola “Dheer” (2016). Mittal Book Agency.

A Naturalist’s Guide to the Mammals of India: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – Bikram Grewal and Rohit Chakravarty (2022). John Beaufoy Publishing.

The Mammals of India: A Systematic and Cartographic Review – Anwaruddin Choudhury (2016). The Rhino Foundation.

A Pictorial Guide to Non-human Primates of India – Sangita Mitra (2011). Naturism.

The Indian Leopard: In the Realm of the Phantom – Robin Biswas (2020). Tellwell Talent.

A Naturalist’s Guide to the Reptiles of India: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – Indraneil Das and Abhijit Das (2017). John Beaufoy Publishing.

Skinks of India – Kaushik Deuti, Sujoy Raha, Probath Bag, Sudipta Debnath, Achyuthan N Srikanthan, and Kailash Chandra (2020). Zoological Survey of India.

Common Snakes of India – Koushik (2018). Oriole Publication.

The Poisonous Terrestrial Snakes of Our British Indian Dominions (including Ceylon) and How to Recognize them: With Symptoms of Snake Poisoning Treatment – F. Wall (1928). Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh.

A Handbook of Indian Crocodiles – V. Subba Rao Madireddi (2011). BR Publishing Corp.

An Illustrated Guide to Common Indian Amphibians and Reptiles – S.R. Ganesh (2015). Chennai Snake Park Trust.

A Naturalist’s Guide to the Insects of India – Meenakshi Venkataraman (2025). John Beaufoy Publishing.

BNHS Field Guides: Butterflies of India – Isaac David Kehimkar (2016). Bombay Natural History Society.

A Naturalist's Guide to the Butterflies of India: Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka – Peter Smetacek (2016). John Beaufoy Publishing.

Butterflies of the Indian Subcontinent: Distributional Checklist – Paul Van Gasse (2021). Tshikolovets Publications.

A Guide to Butterflies of Western Ghats (India): Includes Butterflies of Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat States – Milind Bhakare and Hemant Ogale (2018). Milind Bhakare (privately published).

Birdwing Field Guide to Indian Moths – V. Shubhalaxmi (2018). Birdwing Publishers.

Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Northwest India – Deerendra Singh (2022). Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh.

Handbook of Common Indian Dragonflies (Insecta: Odonata) – Tridib Ranjan Mitra (2006). Zoological Survey of India.

Indian Ocean Reef Guide: Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, South Africa, Mauritius, Madagascar, East Africa, Seychelles – Helmut Debelius (2013). ConchBooks.

Guide to Reef Fishes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands – D.V. Rao (2004). Zoological Survey of India.

Trees of South India: Native Trees and Shrubs of the South Indian Plains and Hillocks – Paul Blanchflower and Marie Demont (2024). Harper Collins India.

A Field Guide to the Palms of India – C. Renuka and V.B. Sreekumar (2012). Kerala Forest Research Institute.

A Naturalist's Guide to the Trees of India: Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka – Pradeep Sachdeva and Vidya Tongbram (2018). John Beaufoy Publishing.

Common Indian Wild Flowers – Isaac Kehimkar (2001). Oxford University Press.

A Color Handbook of Flowering and Medicinal Plants [of India] – Yashwant Rai (2014). Biotech Books India.

Amazing Corbett: A Nature's Dream Destination – India's First National Park and Tiger Reserve – Anup Kumar Sinha (2012). Ayushman Publication House.

Salim Ali, India's Birdman – Reeta Dutta Gupta (2003). Rupa Publications India.

SOUND RECORDINGS

You can listen to and download a range of bird calls and songs from India on the excellent [xeno-canto](#) bird sound library. Additional recordings may be found on [eBird](#) species accounts and some of the apps referenced below.

USEFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES AND APPS

[Aves Vox](#) – this app allows you to download a good selection of bird songs from the [xeno-canto](#) website onto your smartphone, the app can be a bit unreliable and is not the easiest to use

unfortunately so we don't recommend you rely on it too heavily. The xeno-canto website itself is however a wonderful resource.

eBird/Merlin – loads of information that is easy to gather on your smartphone or other devices such as tablets and computers. Sound, photo, and video galleries exist for almost every species in India, via the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library.

IOC World Bird List – the website gives all the latest information on world bird taxonomy according to the scientific body that we use at Birding Ecotours. You can learn about species that have been newly described, any recent and past splits (creation of a new species) and lumps (deletion of a species) of existing species, and plenty of additional useful information on distribution and taxonomy.

Lonely Planet – contains lots of general travel information on India, though some of the places we will be going on our tours are not likely to be mentioned. If you are interested in extending your stay in India before or after the tour, this will help you find some must-see places.



Spotted Forktail occurs on a couple of our Indian birdwatching tours and is always popular. It is a simply stunning bird.