

ITINERARY
NORTHERN INDIA:
Birds, Tiger & the Taj Mahal
January 23 – February 12, 2021



A Tiger sighting is always among the most anticipated experiences on this tour. Participant Linda Rudolph captured this image on our 2020 tour.

We include here information for those interested in the 2021 Field Guides Northern India tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Vast, colorful, and crowded, northern India possesses some of the most spectacular wildlife in Asia and today offers one of the most memorable traveling experiences anywhere in the world. Our tour is designed to show you a fabulous cross section of India's birds and wildlife at some of its most exciting sites—perhaps the optimal itinerary for someone planning to visit India only once.

We'll begin our birding in Delhi where an amazing number of waterbirds gather on the nearby Yamuna River and colorful White-throated Kingfishers, Rose-ringed Parakeets and Purple Sunbirds live right among the throngs of pedestrians who make up one of India's largest cities. The place is humming—Indian city life at its best—and the first morning birding is superb!

For those with a passion for wildlife, few spots are richer than the western state of Rajasthan—home of world-famous Bharatpur wetland and the Tigers of Ranthambhore. Ranthambhore is one of the best places in all India to see that most magnificent of wild creatures—the Tiger! Against a backdrop of the rugged Vindhya Hills, the setting itself is superb, enhanced by a rich variety of mammals and birds that include such specialties as Painted Spurfowl, Painted Sandgrouse, and the critically endangered Indian Vulture, as well as many more widespread species, including the amazing albeit familiar Indian Peafowl. Tiger remains our principal quarry here, although with so elusive and heavily persecuted an animal there can never be any guarantees. Should we strike lucky, then few reserves are more appropriate to seeing the world’s most dramatic carnivore than wonderful Ranthambhore.



Our tour continues with a two-night stay at Bharatpur. Once described as “one of the most magical places on earth,” this outstanding bird paradise embraces eleven square miles of wetland, woodland, and thorny scrub—which on good ‘wet years’ is seemingly awash with birds. The hysterical wailing of Common Jackals, wild bugling of Sarus Cranes, and chaotic honking of Bar-headed and Greylag geese are among the marvels of a Bharatpur dawn. And later, while walking the wood-lined trails we’ll watch for the gorgeous Black-rumped Flameback, the secretive Siberian Rubythroat and perhaps visit a staked out site for Dusky Eagle-Owl or Large-tailed Nightjar. We’ll also make an excursion to a place more sublime than Bharatpur itself—that most ethereal of India’s monuments, the majestic Taj Mahal. During a two-night stay in Agra we’ll visit the Taj Mahal and also a couple of India’s other magnificent monuments—the palaces of Akbar the Great at Fatehpur Sikri, and the Agra Fort. Agra is also our base for a day trip to the Chambal River,

where we’ll travel by boat as we make our way from flocks of Indian Skimmers to pairs of Red-naped Ibis, with giant Gharials (long-nosed fish eating crocodiles) basking on the sand banks and Black-bellied Terns flitting by.

The second portion of the tour will focus on the western Himalayas where our first destination will be Corbett, India’s oldest national park, which was established in 1935 and extends across 200 square miles. The setting is superb and the sheer variety of bird life astounding, with more than 500 species known in the park—from Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Red Junglefowl, Brown Fish-Owl and Black-hooded Oriole, to Plumbeous and White-capped redstarts, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Himalayan Bulbul. Corbett also supports a great assortment of large (but sometimes elusive) animals, including Sambar, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, Sloth Bear (common but seldom seen), Indian Elephant, and even Tiger. We will spend one night inside the park, and three nights outside, where we can walk around more freely.

After Corbett, we will ascend through the foothills, birding as we go. One of the highlights along our route to Nainital will be a stop at a regular wintering site for the elusive and beautiful Wallcreeper - and with luck perhaps a wintering Ibisbill.

As the vegetation gradually changes from deciduous to coniferous woodland, we’ll witness changes in the bird life as well, eventually arriving in the mountains around Nainital that rise to over 8500 feet. On a clear day, the view from the pine-clad ridges above the town is dramatic, and gazing across the deep valley we may be able to see distant Nanda Devi, at 25,642 feet, India’s highest peak. The bird life is no less magnificent, with Himalayan Griffon, Great Barbet, Red-billed Blue-Magpie, Black-headed Jay, Streaked Laughingthrush, a variety of migrant thrushes (largely dependent on weather conditions), Rufous-breasted Accentor, Black-throated and Green-backed tits, and Himalayan Bluetail among an impressive list of upland species we’ll seek.

So join us this winter for an adventure by bus, train, safari jeep, boat, foot, and bicycle-rickshaw through the bird-filled marshes and jungles of northern India!

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 4 miles per day), mostly along roadsides, in some cases with moderately steep tracks, but more frequently on gentle rather than steep grades. The exception is at Nainital, where several trails are steep in sections (optional).
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We regularly travel for long periods on this tour, using a variety of transport. For our long drives between the main destinations we will be in a Tata Tourist Bus. At Ranthambhore (for Tiger viewing) we will use an open-sided 18 seater Canter safari vehicle, and at Corbett NP several small Suzuki-Maruti 'jeeps'. Participants should be able to step up (and down) 10 -12 inches to get into and out of our various vehicles.
- **PACE:** After breakfast (often around 7:00 a.m., but sometimes earlier), we will bird until lunch time. We may then take a break after lunch, or continue birding, or travel to our next destination. The pace of this tour is generally relaxed, as we only have about 10 1/2 hours of daylight at this time of year.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the 30s at night and in the early morning to 70s or 80s F during the day. Usually it will be dry, but sometimes foggy in the mornings, and occasional rain showers are a possibility. Although unusual, at Nainital there is a chance of snow.
- **ELEVATION:** We reach elevations of up to 8000 feet on this tour and spend three nights at an elevation of about 7000 feet.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature, as there are simply no other options (away from our lodgings) on many sections of this tour's route.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations (as we do often on this tour).

For the birder visiting India, the *Birds of Northern India* by Richard Grimmett and Tim Inskipp (published in North America by Princeton University Press) is excellent for use in the field.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

Itinerary for Northern India: Birds, Tiger & the Taj Mahal

Days 1-2, Sat-Sun, 23-24 Jan. Flights to Delhi. Most flights from the U.S. are overnight flights, arriving the following evening in Delhi. Please plan you flights to arrive in Delhi no later than the evening of Sunday, January 24. Terry will contact you with information on tomorrows activities during the evening of January 24. Night at The Suryaa Hotel.

Day 3, Mon, 25 Jan. Delhi, and on to Ranthambore. This morning we will meet for breakfast at 6:30 a.m. and then take a short drive to the Okhla Bird Sanctuary on the banks of Delhi's Yamuna River. Waterfowl can be plentiful here and include hundreds of migrant ducks and geese, Little Cormorant, a variety of herons, Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Gray-headed Swamphen, and Brown-headed Gull. There is usually a good selection of waders here, too, including River Lapwing and sometimes even Greater Painted-Snipe. Landbirds may include Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Coppersmith Barbet, Red-vented Bulbul, Plain, Yellow-bellied, and Graceful prinias, Striated Babbler, White-tailed Stonechat, Purple Sunbird, and Bank Myna. There can be few major cities with such spectacular numbers of birds on the doorstep, and it should be a most memorable first Indian morning.

Around midday we will drive to the railway station and then take a 5:1/2 hour train journey to Sawai Modhopur where we will be met by our local agent for the short transfer to our lodge at Ranthambhore. Dinner and overnight at Jungle Vilas.

Days 4-5, Tue-Wed, 26-27 Jan. Ranthambhore. Dominated by a vast 11th-century fortress of the same name, Ranthambhore is a 400-square-kilometer park situated in an area of rocky hill country, clothed in dry, deciduous forest, grassland and scrub, dotted with several small lakes that can be alive with birds. Seeing tiger will be a priority, and it

requires covering much ground every morning and afternoon, eyes directed at every angle. Aside from the Tigers, large mammals are particularly well represented at Ranthambhore, and among the species we might see are Sambar, Spotted Deer, Nilgai, Dorcas Gazelle (Chinkara), the ubiquitous (Five-striped) Palm Squirrel, Common Langur, Indian Gray and Common mongoose, Wild Boar, and Indian Flying-Fox. Leopard and Sloth Bear are also present in the park, though both are seen infrequently.

Ranthambhore also boasts an exciting array of birds, and on our travels around the sanctuary we will be looking for such species as Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Indian Vulture, Jungle Bush-Quail, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Indian Roller, Alexandrine and Plum-headed (gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous!) parakeets, Small Minivet, Large Cuckooshrike, Bay-backed and Long-tailed shrikes, White-bellied Drongo, Rufous Treepie, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher (now in the family Stenostiridae), Indian White-eye, and Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. In the dry fields and scrubby hillsides outside Ranthambhore we could add Painted Sandgrouse, Rufous-tailed Lark, and Isabelline and Desert wheatears, while at a nearby reservoir parties of endangered Dalmatian Pelicans may have arrived from their breeding sites in Kazakhstan. With luck, we might find them next to flotillas of Great White Pelicans, perhaps the enormous Pallas's Gull, or the striking Great Thick-knee. Waterfowl are often abundant at this season, with Red-crested and Ferruginous pochards amidst impressive rafts of Northern Shoveler in deep-water years. We'll have two full days at Ranthambhore with morning and afternoon drives within the reserve. Nights at Jungle Vilas.



*Numerous specialties including the fancy Painted Spurfowl will highlight our birding.
Photo by participant Jody Gillespie.*

Days 6-7, Thu-Fri, 28-29 Jan. Bharatpur (the Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary). After breakfast on day 6 we'll catch the early morning "up" train and head north to Bharatpur. We'll then transfer the short distance by bus to our lodge just outside the reserve, before spending most of the remainder of the day and the whole of day 7 in the reserve and at nearby Bund Baretha.

One of Asia's most famous bird sanctuaries, Bharatpur (now known as Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary) is in the midst of change. During the past few years this magnificent reserve has occasionally suffered from a lack of water, as people pressure demanded its use for irrigation. It's impossible to know what the situation will be like in 2021, but we hope the new pipeline, which the government was installing, will be complete and Bharatpur will return to its former glory. Even if the water levels are not high, we can still enjoy our time here visiting the nearby Bund Baretha where thousands of water birds gather when Bharatpur is dry. Here, among the huge flocks of Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail are smaller (but significant) numbers of Greylag and Bar-headed geese, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Red-crested Pochard, and Cotton Pygmy-goose. A few Indian Cormorant (scarce at this time of year) should also be present, while larger numbers

of Black-necked, Painted, and Woolly-necked storks, Asian Openbill, Black-headed Ibis, White-breasted Waterhen, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged jacanas, and White-tailed Lapwings all inhabit the marshy fringes.

With no large predators to worry about (either inside or outside the reserve), we'll be free to wander at will, enjoying our birding on foot; the tree-lined walkways are the wintering haunts of Hume's Warbler, Blyth's Reed-Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Bluethroat, and the occasional Siberian Rubythroat. Uniquely, we'll also travel by bicycle-rickshaw, which not only let's us travel further afield, but allows the sharp-eyed and knowledgeable rickshaw drivers to show us roosting owls (perhaps Dusky Eagle-Owl, Spotted Owlet, and Indian Scops-Owl) or nightjars. In dry years the rickshaws also allow access to the arid fields beyond the wetlands, which can be excellent for Yellow-wattled Lapwing and the elusive Indian Courser.

No matter what conditions we encounter, Bharatpur is always a wonderful place for birds, and whether we're watching migrant raptors crossing the skies, or searching the woodlands for resident species such as Indian Gray Hornbill, Coppersmith and Brown-headed barbets, Common Woodshrike and Brahminy Starling, there will be plenty to enjoy here. Nights at Kadamb Kunj, Bharatpur.

Day 8, Sat, 30 Jan. Bharatpur to Agra. After a final morning and lunch at Bharatpur we'll drive towards Agra stopping on route at the abandoned red sandstone city of Fatehpur Sikri. Formerly the residence of Akbar the Great, the palaces and other adjoining buildings are quite simply magnificent. Egyptian Vultures, Dusky Crag-Martins and Indian Chats also find the buildings to their liking, helping to ensure that our visit to this mysterious place is not purely cultural. We'll then drive for about another 1½ hours, to Agra our base for the next two nights, and home of India's most famous building – the Taj Mahal. Night at the Trident Hotel.

Day 9, Sun, 31 Jan. The Chambal River. Today we'll travel for about two hours by bus to a little known area (but one which is fast becoming known to birders), the Chambal River. This is one of the most unpolluted rivers in northern India and will undoubtedly be our best chance to see the increasingly rare Indian Skimmer. During a two-hour boat trip the Skimmer will be our main target species, but we'll also see a whole array of other birds, perhaps including Lesser Whistling-Duck, Red-naped Ibis, Great Thick-knee, Black-bellied and River terns, and Sand Lark. It's also a good place for Gharial (a long-snouted fish-eating crocodile) and even the rare Ganges Dolphin. In the afternoon we'll return to Agra. Night at the Trident Hotel.



Pheasant-tailed Jacanas expose their spectacular wing pattern in flight. Photo by guide Tom Johnson.

Day 10, Mon, 1 Feb. The Taj Mahal, and return to Delhi. It's only a short hop from the Trident Hotel to the white-marble Taj Mahal, where after time for photography and a walk through the Moghul designed gardens, we can enter the majestic monument itself. Our local expert guide will inform us not just that the Taj was built by the Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, but also on every aspect of the "how and why" this world wonder was built.

Later we'll visit the impressive Agra Fort, where Shah Jahan spent the last eight years of his life imprisoned by his own evil son—only a distant view of his magnificent monument to console him.

Security for visiting the Taj is very strict so please remember no pocketknives, lighters, or other instruments of potential defacement; photography is not allowed within the tomb area but is perfectly okay everywhere else.

In the afternoon we will drive back to Delhi. Night at The Suryaa Hotel.

Day 11, Tue, 2 Feb. To the Ramnagar-Kumeria area. Today is largely a travel day and our advice is to sit back, relax, and watch India go by. Most of the drive is through the plains, which are largely covered with mustard fields, but by mid-afternoon we should arrive in the mountains and our hotel, which overlooks a picturesque wooded valley just outside Corbett National Park. Garden birds include Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Himalayan Bulbul, Golden-fronted Leafbird, White-crested Laughingthrush, and Crimson Sunbird. Night at The Den, just outside Corbett National Park.

Day 12, Wed, 3 Feb. The Ramnagar-Kumeria area. Located outside the park where the problem of large predators is reduced and we have more freedom to walk, our hotel and the area around it is a prime birding area. We'll spend the day birding in the nearby forest and alongside the rushing Kosi River. Here we may find Orange-bellied Leafbird, Hair-crested Drongo and Scarlet Minivets in the canopy, while overhead we'll look for Crested Treeswifts and a good selection of raptors. The rocky watercourses hold some wonderful species, including Tawny Fish-Owl, Brown Dipper, jaunty Spotted and Little forketails, numerous White-capped and Plumbeous redstarts, and hopefully a wintering Wallcreeper somewhere among the boulders. Our first taste of mixed-species flocks may include White-throated Fantail, Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail, Pale-rumped Warbler and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch. If trees are fruiting, Slaty-headed and Red-breasted parakeets may be seen, and Blue Whistling-Thrush (normally a shy species) are numerous and tame here. Night at The Den.



*We'll watch for the fantastic Wallcreeper along the Kosi River or in the Nainital area.
Photo by guide Tom Johnson.*

Day 13, Thu, 4 Feb. Corbett National Park. This morning we'll leave in our 4x4 Gypsies, traveling and birding through some splendid scenic countryside as we head for Corbett National Park (about a one-and-a-half hour drive). Established in 1935 and comprising more than 200 square miles, Corbett is India's oldest national park. Our accommodation inside the park, Dikhala Lodge, is limited, fairly poorly maintained (but improving in 2019) and basic by western standards—with unpredictable supplies of water and electricity—but it is invariably booked months in advance. Why? The answer is simply that the setting is superb and the variety of bird life astounding. The park also supports a healthy population of large animals, among them Sloth Bear, Marsh Muger Crocodile, Indian Elephant, and Tiger – thus our birding at Corbett will be mostly by vehicle,

The Tigers are difficult to see at Corbett, but their prey is common, and we should see Wild Boar, Sambar, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, and perhaps a few Hog Deer. We also expect a wide range of bird species with possibilities including Red Junglefowl, Kalij Pheasant, Cinereous and Red-headed vultures, Pallas's and Lesser fish-eagles, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Asian Emerald Dove, Brown Fish-Owl, Greater and Himalayan flamebacks, Common Iora, Long-tailed Minivet, Black-hooded Oriole, Gray Treepie, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, Black-crested and Ashy bulbuls, Gray-hooded Warbler, and Rufous-bellied Niltava. Behind our lodge is a scrubby slope that always holds a few interesting wintering species such as Slaty-blue Flycatcher and Aberrant Bush-Warbler, while the plains below the lodge are the habitat of Black Francolin. Night at Dhikala Lodge.

Day 14, Fri, 5 Feb. Corbett and back to Kumeria. We'll have most of today to look for more birds and mammals in Corbett before driving back to our hotel outside the park in the late afternoon. Night at Banyan Retreat near Ramnagar.

Day 15, Sat, 6 Feb. To Nainital. After breakfast we'll begin our drive to Nainital (in the Himalayan foothills), but first if still necessary, take time to stop at a well known site for Wallcreeper, and if we're really lucky, the magnificent Ibisbill. Later, as we ascend the rocky mountains, the vegetation will gradually change from dry, deciduous forest to light coniferous woodland interspersed with areas of ragged vertical bare rock. A new, fascinating, and diverse avifauna awaits us with

likely first encounters including Blue-capped Redstart, Green-backed and Black-throated tits, Bar-tailed Treecreeper, and Rock Bunting. Night at Vikram Vintage Inn, Nainital.

Days 16-18, Sun-Tue, 7-9 Feb. The Nainital area. We'll have three full days to enjoy birding around the hill station of Nainital. Situated at 6400 feet and surrounded by peaks that rise to over 8500 feet (we reach about 7500 feet), this popular resort town offers spectacular vistas—and a bird list to match. While many species are resident, at this time of year these middle slopes of the Himalayas are visited by a varying assortment of birds from far and wide, some Siberian breeders on their regular wintering grounds and others altitudinal migrants that drop lower in response to winter storms on the higher peaks. The birding is always good but numbers and the variety of species vary tremendously from year to year. Several species of woodpeckers including Greater Yellownappe, Gray-faced, and Brown-fronted are usually seen as well as a variety of passerines such as Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush, Gray-winged Blackbird, Buff-barred Warbler, Small Niltava, Himalayan Bluetail, Rufous Sibia, Yellow-browed Tit, and White-tailed Nuthatch. The corvids are especially nice, with the specialty being Black-headed Jay, sometimes mixed in with the equally attractive Eurasian Jay and Red-billed Blue-Magpie as the aesthetic star. The skies are regularly crossed by Himalayan Griffon.

On one or two days we'll take box lunches for a day trip to fields and wooded valleys lower on the slopes in pursuit of a slightly different species mix from that in the conifers around Nainital. Up to a dozen species of migrant warblers occur in the woodlands, forktails along the streams, perhaps a skulking Chestnut-headed Tesia or Scaly-breasted Cupwing in the streamside shrubbery, and flocks of the variously bold or shy White-throated and Rufous-chinned laughingthrushes in the undergrowth. Fields bordered by shrubbery are the habitat for three species of accentor (irregular in numbers), both White-tailed and Siberian rubythroats, and Pink-browed and Common rosefinches. Nights of Days 16 and 17 at Vikram Vintage Inn, Nainital; Day 18 at Banyan Retreat near Ramnagar.

Day 19, Wed, 10 Feb. Return to Delhi. After some early birding we'll return to Delhi by train. Again, this is mainly a day for traveling, to sit back and absorb the bustling Indian countryside, and to reflect upon the vivid memories and rich experiences of the tour so far. Evening arrival in Delhi. Night in Delhi.

Day 20, Thu, 11 Feb. Delhi area/Sultanpur Jheel; departure for home. This morning we'll take a picnic lunch and drive to the Sultanpur Jheel National Park about one hour away. Of course water levels and numbers of birds vary significantly from year to year, but we expect to see good numbers of ducks and perhaps a wintering flock of Bar-headed Geese. The surrounding woodlands can be good for Imperial Eagle, Red Collared-Dove, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and Long-tailed Minivet, while the dry plains give us another chance for Indian Courser, Yellow-wattled Lapwing and Indian Bushlark. We'll eat lunch at the reserve and then return to our hotel in the early afternoon, giving us plenty of time to wash up and change before enjoying a farewell dinner prior to catching the overnight flight home.

Day 21, Fri, 12 Feb. Arrival home.

About Your Guide

Terry Stevenson; originally from England, Terry has made Kenya his home since 1977. He is the senior author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi*—the only guide in the region to have a text and maps opposite plates format; it has recently been released as an App, with the added advantage of making it possible to hear many of the calls. He is also co-author to *Birds of the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Socotra*. Published in 2009, this acclaimed guide is the only one to this region. He is a member of the East African Rarities Committee. On November 30, 1986, he set a new World Big Day record with 330 species *seen* in one day in Kenya; the record stands today. One of Africa's and India's foremost bird-tour guides, Terry has led numerous Field Guides tours across the African continent, in Madagascar, and in India. He is currently living in a mud-and-cow-dung mansion near Mt. Kenya.

"This was one of the most memorable tours I have been on. This was my first time with Terry Stevenson. It was a very good experience, and I will look to take another tour with him. He is knowledgeable, funny, and has a great sense of humor." L.R., Northern India

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Terry's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo

Financial Information

FEE: \$9875 from Delhi

DEPOSIT: \$1000 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 25, 2020

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$2215

LIMIT: 9

Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Sharon Mackie. Sharon will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS, FOOD, AND CULTURE: Hotels are clean and comfortable, rather than luxurious, and participants on our past tours have found our lodgings a pleasant surprise. The only exception is the rather basic and poorly maintained Dhikala Lodge in Corbett National Park. But, even this government operated "lodge" has recently been re-vamped, we only spend one night there, and it is right on the spot (and the only game in town inside Corbett National Park).

There is a possibility that singles may not be available at one or more of our lodgings (especially at Dhikala), though in the recent past this has not been a problem and singles were given everywhere. Rooms in each of our lodgings have private facilities, though at Dhikala the plumbing is poorly maintained and does not always function properly.

Breakfasts and dinners will normally be taken at the hotels; our typical meal schedule will be a full though simple breakfast and a substantial varied but Indian-style dinner. Lunches will be a mix of packed lunches prepared by the hotels (rather basic and repetitive) and sit-down meals when in close proximity to our hotel or lodge. For some people, stomach discomfort can be a problem throughout India, and your guide may recommend you consider a vegetarian diet.

India can be a culture shock for the unwary. There are people just about everywhere and conditions in some areas can be described as squalid. Roads can be very crowded, making progress slow and driving a bit of an adventure. However, the people are friendly and do not harass their wildlife, so despite the downsides, it is a wonderful place to visit.

A NOTE ON ALTITUDE: Around Nainital we shall be birding up to an altitude of about 7500 feet; a couple of the trails are steep in places, but the pace is slow.

CLOTHING: As on all birding tours, we recommend that your outer jacket, hat, and trousers are in reasonably muted colors, therefore, no bright reds, yellows, or whites. **Please also read the section on Climate and Clothing in the Information Bulletin as North India may well be colder at this time of year than what you are expecting!**

DOCUMENTS: A current **passport** is necessary for US citizens to enter India. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. US citizens must also obtain a **tourist visa** for India (in 2020 this could be applied for online and known as an e-Tourist Visa, as requirements can change please contact the office for the latest information).

Also please note, for entry in to national parks in India our ground agent needs to inform the authorities of your name and passport number in advance, therefore please bring the same valid passport with you that you will previously have given the details of.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Indian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries

require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility. Also please note: for our one night at Dikhala (inside Corbett National Park) we request that you have a small overnight bag as there is very little room for main luggage in our safari jeeps.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$9875 for one person in double occupancy from Delhi. It includes all lodging from Day 2 through Day 19 and day rooms in Delhi on Day 20, all meals from breakfast on Day 3 through dinner on Day 20, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Delhi, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature, including the recent introduction at some reserves for using a camera or video recorder (this fee is typically \$3-10).

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$2215. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$1000** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by September 25, 2020. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

Field Guides reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full

settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

1/29/20TS