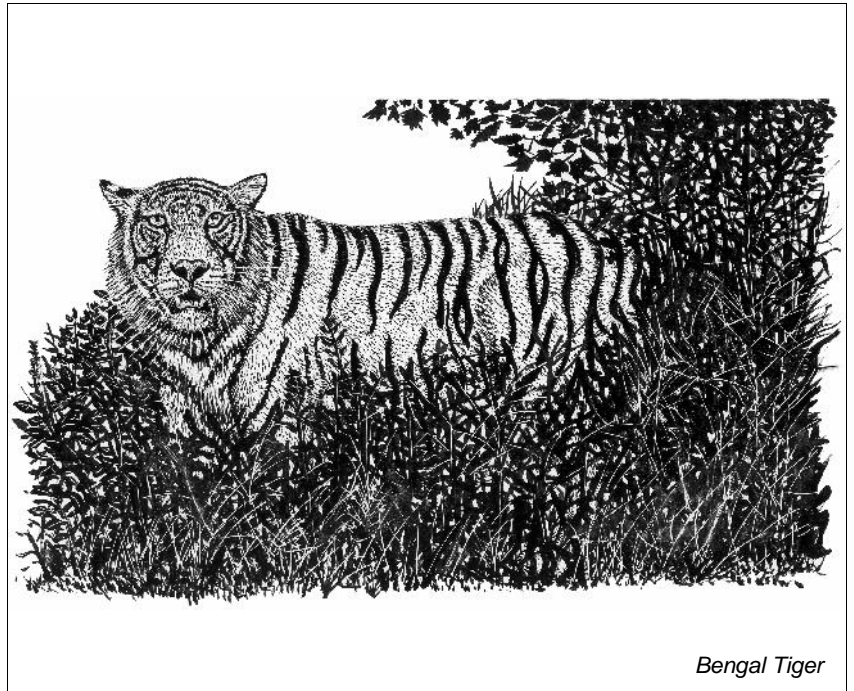


NORTHERN INDIA

a classic tour combining birds, tigers and the Taj Mahal



Bengal Tiger

For anyone with a love of natural history, the chance to see a magnificent Bengal Tiger in the wild is an opportunity not to be missed.

At the Project Tiger reserve of Kanha, there is an excellent chance of seeing these magnificent creatures, alongside numerous other animals and birds. Add to this a classic tour of Northern India's Golden Triangle: Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, plus the delights of Bharatpur and the Chambal River, and you have the ingredients for a truly epic wildlife and cultural holiday.

The Chambal River is a great place to see Indian Skimmer, as well as Gangetic Dolphin and Gharial. At Bharatpur, our quarry includes Black-necked Stork, Eastern Imperial Eagle and Sarus Crane. In the semi-desert of Rajasthan we will look for Desert Wheatear, Indian Courser and White-capped Bunting. The forest at Kanha holds Red-naped Ibis, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Indian Scimitar-babbler. The Amber Fort and Taj Mahal provide a distraction from the birding just long enough to give us an appetite for more birds. We will spend two nights in Delhi, two nights at Dholpur near the Chambal River, three nights at Bharatpur, two nights in Jaipur, one night at Raipur and four nights at Kanha, giving us plenty of time to find all these birds and more....

ITINERARY

DELHI

Our flight arrives in Delhi a little before midnight, so it is good that our hotel for the first two nights is not far away.

Our first full day will be spent birding at a leisurely pace in the vicinity of Delhi. In the morning we will visit the Yamuna River, with its abundant ducks, waders, herons, gulls and terns. Key species include Indian Shag, River Lapwing, White-tailed Plover, Great Black-headed Gull, Brown-headed Gull, Rosy Pipit, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Striated Babbler and Black-breasted Weaver. In the afternoon we will visit Tughlaqabad Fort.

CHAMBAL RIVER

The following morning we will leave Delhi, travelling to Dholpur, south east of Agra, for a stay of two nights. Here we will take a boat trip on the Chambal River to see Gharials, Muggar Crocodiles and Gangetic Dolphins, and we have a great chance of Bar-headed Goose, Openbill Stork, Indian Skimmer, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Thick-knee and the globally-threatened Black-bellied Tern. Jungle Cats are fairly common and we have seen several on recent visits.

BHARATPUR

On day five we will drive west to Bharatpur, and the Keoladeo Ghana National Park, for a stay of three nights. En route we will visit the Taj Mahal at Agra, allowing plenty of time to walk around the grounds and inside this magnificent building.

Hardly needing an introduction, Bharatpur is one of the most famous bird reserves in the world.

Walking along raised banks we can expect Bluethroats in abundance, along with small numbers of Siberian Rubythroats and Smoky Warblers. Waterside trees hold Marshall's Iora, White-browed Fantail, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and Indian Grey Hornbill. Being such a well-watched area, many nocturnal birds can be seen at their daytime roosts. Local guides can show us roosting Indian Scops Owls, Oriental Scops Owls, Dusky Eagle Owls and Spotted Owlets, as well as Jungle and Large-tailed Nightjars.

We will be hoping for a good monsoon prior to our visit which will allow thousands of Painted Storks and other waterbirds to nest. Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, Greater Painted Snipes, Black Bitterns, Brown Crakes, Cotton Pygmy Geese, Black-necked Storks, Common Cranes, White-breasted Kingfishers and Citrine Wagtails are amongst the

multitude of birds we can expect to see. Eagles are one of the main attractions of Bharatpur, as they give fantastic views. Eastern Imperial, Greater Spotted, Indian Spotted, Bonelli's and Steppe Eagles were all seen at close range on our last visit.

Bharatpur has suffered from a lack of water in recent times. We are pleased to report that following a ruling in the Indian High Court, there is a plan to supply water to the reserve through newly constructed canals, restoring this globally important site to its former glory.

On day eight we will leave Bharatpur and drive to Jaipur.

JAIPUR

To most tourists, the riches of Jaipur comprise its magnificent Amber Fort and the breathtaking gems and fine carpets on sale behind dusty shop fronts. We can also appreciate the stark rocky hillsides, beautiful lakes and exciting birdlife which combine to make the city a must on any visit to Northern India. We will spend half a day visiting the traditional tourist sites, plus two half days of birding. Desert Wheatear, Eastern Pied Wheatear, Long-billed Pipit, Grey-necked Bunting, Indian Courser, Jungle Bush Quail, Sirkeer Malkoha and Rufous-tailed Lark are all possible. Opposite our excellent hotel is the Jal Mahal, a large lake which holds hundreds of birds including Indian River Tern, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint and Greater Flamingo.

On day ten we will drive back to Delhi, stopping en route at the wetland oasis of Sultanpur. The reserve is centred around a jheel (a shallow lake surrounded by a raised bank) and hosts nesting Painted Storks as well as Sarus Crane and Spot-billed Duck. Black-shouldered Kites are particularly common here. In the surrounding dry grassland and scrub we can hope to find Indian Roller, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Large Grey Babbler and Red Avadavat. Shrikes are a feature of the area, with Isabelline, Bay-backed, Southern Grey and Long-tailed all expected. The most conspicuous mammal here is the Blue Bull or Nilgai, a large antelope. There is also the chance of Small Indian Mongoose and Jackal.

KANHA

We will then fly to Raipur where we will stay overnight. The next day we will drive to Kanha, birding on the way, and arrive for lunch.

We will spend four nights here, at the luxurious Hotel Baagh, on the doorstep of one of India's premier tiger reserves. Game drives can be taken morning and afternoon, each day, by both jeep and elephant. They offer us the best chance anywhere in the world of seeing Tiger. We will, of course, also be birding, looking out for the numerous species which inhabit the lakes and forests. Oriental Darter and Red-naped Ibis are amongst the waterbirds. In the air there are Red-headed Vultures, White-eyed Buzzards, Crested Serpent-eagles and Changeable Hawk-eagles. In the forest we can hope to see Crested Tree Swift, Lesser Flameback, Small Minivet, Blue-winged Leafbird, Orange-headed Ground Thrush and Black-headed Oriole. During the game drives we can expect sightings of Red Junglefowl, Indian Peafowl, Woolly-necked Stork, Alexandrine Parakeet, Verditer Flycatcher and Crested Bunting.

On day 15 we will fly back from Nagpur to Delhi, allowing plenty of time to connect with our flight back to the UK.

CLIMATE AND PACE

Winter in northern India is rather mild, with warm days and cool nights. Rain is very unlikely, but early morning mist is not unusual. At Kanha it is likely to be hot in the middle of the day, when we will take a siesta. Breakfast will normally be taken at 7am, except at Kanha, when an earlier breakfast is required before the 6.30am game drives. Long breaks during the day at Kanha will allow people to catch up on their rest. There is no uphill walking of any significance.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

Full-board accommodation will be provided, with two nights at the Residence Hotel in Delhi, two nights at the Raj Niwas Palace, Dholpur, three nights at the Bagh Hotel, Bharatpur, two nights at the Hotel Trident in Jaipur, one night at the Babylon International Hotel, Raipur, and four nights at the Hotel Baagh, Kanha. All accommodations are of a high standard and all offer continental cuisine as well as a wide choice of local dishes. Most lunches will be taken at our hotels.

PRICE INCLUDES

All birdwatching excursions with expert leader and local guide, full-board accommodation (starting with breakfast on 5th, ending with dinner on 18th), local transport by coach, soft drinks at meal times, bottled water throughout, all safari activities (jeep drives, elephant rides, boat trips), all reserve and site entrance fees, domestic flight, international flights.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

Travel insurance. Cost of obtaining an Indian visa (approx. £90). Items of a personal nature, alcoholic drinks, laundry. Please note: the Indian authorities are planning to introduce a visa-on-entry system in 2014. We hope that it will be up and running in time for this trip, saving us all time and money.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Return flights from both London Heathrow and Manchester to Delhi (via Paris) using the scheduled services of Air France. Outbound flight departs early morning, return flight arrives back early morning. Flights may also be available from other UK airports with KLM. Please contact us for details.

15 nights including one overnight flight:	4th to 19th February 2015
Principal leader:	Andrew Woodall
Maximum group size:	12 clients with one leader and a local guide
Local guide:	Babloo Khan
Cost with discount (if you book before 22nd October 2014):	£3980 per person sharing (£490 single supplement)
Full Cost:	£4130 per person sharing
Deposit:	£600 per person