

Assam, Nagaland & Arunachal Pradesh Birding Trip 20 N/ 21 D

Bird watching trip along the Northeast's best parks and reserves

Tour JTT-NE-WB01: Delhi – Guwahati – Nameri N.P. – Eaglenest W.S. – Kaziranga – Khonoma – Jorhat – Namdapha N.P. – Dibru-Saikhowa N.P. – Dibrugarh – Delhi

On this unique tour, you travel along the flood plains of the majestic Brahmaputra in Assam (NE India) visiting the famous Kaziranga National Park and the less known but equally bird-rich Nameri N.P. and Dibru-Saikhowa N.P. More than 500 bird species can be seen on this trip in the plains alone. But we'll also explore the mountains. We'll spend four full days of birding in Eaglenest Sanctuary, a bird watchers heaven if there ever was one, and we go birding in the rarely visited Tragopan Sanctuary near Khonoma (Nagaland).

You'll stay in comfortable accommodation whenever possible, or in more simple guesthouses and lodges where nothing else is available, and you'll be accompanied by very experienced local birding guides.

Itinerary

Day 01: Arrive Guwahati – Nameri NP

You will be received at Guwahati by our representative and transferred to Nameri National Park. Lunch will be on the way. Your accommodation will be in a charming, traditionally done-up eco-camp, a fixed-tent accommodation with en suite shower and WC.

Day 02: Full day Nameri NP

The day will begin with an early morning trek inside the park with a packed breakfast accompanied by a naturalist and forest guards. Following this, you will return to the camp for lunch. In the afternoon, you will be gently rafting on the Jia Borelli River that forms the southern border of the park. There are good chances for you to spot the ibis bill while rafting besides cormorants, darters, ruddy shell ducks and other aquatic birds.

Birds to be seen: white-winged wood duck, ibis bill, broadbills, collared falconet, pin-tailed green and pompadour pigeon, wreathed and great hornbill, dollar bird, chestnut-headed and blue-bearded bee-eater, daurian redstart, pratincoles, and various barbets.

Day 03: Nameri NP – Eaglenest, 120 km/ 5 hours

In the morning, we drive to Eagle's Nest. On the way, we make a few birding stops at Bhalukpong, the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border and Tippi. Our first halt here will be at the Lama Camp located amidst temperate broad-leaved forests at an altitude of 2350 m.

Birds to be seen: kaleej pheasants, crimson woodpecker, Bhutan laughing-thrush, rusty-fronted barwings, new liocichla, gould's shortwing, rusty-throated wren babbler, spotted wren babbler, yellow-rumped honeyguide, slender-billed scimitar-babbler, lesser and greater rufous-headed parrotbills, Temminck's tragopan, rufous-throated partridge, hill partridge, red-faced liocichla, spotted laughingthrush, black-headed shrike babbler, wards trogon, bar-winged wren babbler, brown and fulvous parrotbill, fire-tailed myzornis, fire-tailed sunbird, Mrs Gould's sunbird, spotted laughingthrush, black-headed shrike babbler, wards trogon, rusty-capped fulvetta, brown-throated fulvetta, fire-tailed myzornis, alpine accentors, maroon-backed accentor, rufous-breasted accentor, Blyth's tragopan, black-headed shrike babbler, wards trogon, bar-winged wren babbler, rusty-throated wren babbler, rusty-bellied shortwing, lesser shortwing, white-tailed robin, golden-breasted fulvetta, yellow-browed fulvetta, long-billed wren babbler, wedge-billed wren babbler, green and purple cochoa, beautiful nuthatch, cutias, rusty-bellied shortwing, lesser shortwing, white-tailed robin, golden-breasted fulvetta, yellow-browed fulvetta, wedge-billed wren babbler, scaly wren babbler, eye-browed wren babbler, green and purple cochoa, beautiful nuthatch, cutias, rusty-bellied shortwing, lesser shortwing, white-tailed robin, golden-breasted fulvetta, yellow-browed fulvetta, lesser and greater rufous-headed parrotbill.

Day 04: Eaglenest – Lama camp

We will do a morning birding session around Lama Camp on foot and then drive to Eaglenest Pass (2800 m), and back. Birding will be along a jeep track in temperate bamboo, conifer, broad-leaved forest and shrub.

Day 05: Eaglenest – Lama camp to Bompou camp

We will do some more birding at Lama Camp, and drive to Bompou camp (1940 m). It is a birding drive and trek along the jeep track over the pass and down to Chaku and Bompou at 1940 m. The habitat is a temperate broad-leaved forest, meadows, road-side shrubs. Overnight at Bompou camp.

Day 06: Eaglenest – Bompou camp

It will be a full day of birding around the Bompou camp.

Day 07: Eaglenest – Bompou camp

Today we try to drive/ trek down towards Sessni and return to Bompou Camp.

Day 08: Eaglenest – Bompou Camp - return to Lama camp.

We drive back to Lama camp today for our overnight stay.

Day 09: Eaglenest – Kaziranga, 260 km/ 6 -7 hours

We start early and drive down to the Assam plains and then continue on to Kaziranga. Check into Wild Grass Resort. Afternoon walk around a tea garden looking for birds.

Birds to be seen (490 recorded species): falcated teal, white-eyed pochard and spot-billed pelican, Bengal florican, yellow-vented warbler, great hornbill, redheaded trogon, green-backed heron, white bellied heron (rare), lesser and greater adjutants, black-necked storks, spoonbill, grey-headed and pallas's fish-eagle (common), brown fish-owl, swamp francolin (common), grey-headed lapwing, black-bellied tern, marsh babbler, Jordan's bushchat (rare), white-throated bushchat, lineated barbet, blue-eared barbet, blue-bearded bee-eater, spotted redshank, river lapwing, grey-headed fish eagle, pied harrier, spot-billed pelican, black-necked stork, rosy minivet, spot-winged starling, dark-necked tailorbird, ruby-cheeked sunbird, streaked spiderhunter, forest wagtail, Blyth's pipit, and yellow-breasted bunting.

Day 10: Kaziranga

Morning and afternoon, we do a jeep safari in Kaziranga NP. Overnight stay will be at the Wild Grass Resort (or similar).

Day 11: Kaziranga – Khonoma, 250 km/ 6 hours

We drive to Khonoma in the state of Nagaland. We will be driving up to 1500 m passing through the capital city of Kohima. Khonoma is regarded by all Nagas as the bastion which was never subjugated by any outside force and the villagers are proud of their history. Today Khonoma is named as the 'Green' village of Nagaland because of their commitment to protecting the environment. Overnight will at a village homestay.

Day 12: Khonoma

The Tragopan sanctuary lies just beyond the village, and is so named as the blyth's tragopan is found here, though sightings cannot be guaranteed. This sanctuary is rarely visited and a species list is yet to be assembled. But in any case, there are reasonably good chances of seeing the following species: blyth's tragopan, kaleej pheasants, hill partridges, rufous-throated partridge, mountain bamboo partridges, grey-sided thrush, black-breasted thrush, eye-browed thrush, solitary snipe, slaty-backed flycatcher, vivid niltava, golden bush robin, grey-sided laughing thrush, striped

laughing hrush, blue-winged laughing thrush, red-faced liocichla, spot-breasted scimitar babbler, naga wren-babbler, spotted wren babbler, rusty-capped fulvetta, chestnut-vented nuthatch and the fire-tailed sunbird.

Early morning, we will set out for a walk in the sanctuary, going over meadows interspersed with the alder trees. Apart from the birds, you will spot the *mithun* here, the bovine that is a great asset to the Nagas (and Arunachalis) as it symbolizes social status.

In the afternoon, we walk in the Khonoma village before going out again for bird watching until dusk.

Day 13: Khonoma – Jorhat (230 km/ 5 hrs)

IN the morning again, there will be birding in the sanctuary.

In the afternoon, we drive to Jorhat, where we check into Hotel Earl Grey (or similar) near the by - pass road.

Day 14: Jorhat – Namdapha, 290 kh/7.5 to 8 hours

We start around 5 am, drive to Miao in Arunachal Pradesh. On reaching Miao, we obtain our passes for entry into the park and seize the opportunity to have a quick look at the small 'wild life' museum. We then proceed to Deban, 20 kms away for overnight stay at the Forest Rest House or tented camps. Deban is a picturesque clearing in the forest surrounded by trees.

Day 15: Deban-Haldibari

We cross the Neo Dhing River and climb for about 300 m, before walking along a ridge to reach Haldibari. The walk is made more amazing with birdcalls. We reach Haldibari around noon. Overnight stay is in a tented accommodation.

Birds to be seen in Namdapha (665 recorded species): racket-tailed drongo, blue whistling thrush, red headed trogon, silver-eared mesia, tesias. crested kingfisher, white-tailed sea eagle wallcreeper, white-capped water redstarts, five species of fork tails, great, brown and rufous-necked hornbills, fairy bluebird, beautiful sibia, yellow and black sultan tits, streaked spider hunter, bay woodpecker, white-browed piculet, rusty-fronted barwing, white-hooded babbler, babblers, fulvetta and laughing hrushes, grey peacock pheasant, several species of wren babblers, beautiful nuthatch, black-throated parrotbill, long-tailed broadbills, large scimitar babblers, mountain scops owl and collared owlet.

Day 16: Haldibari-Hornbill Glade

From Haldibari, Hornbill Glade is at a distance of 5 kms. The trek is a gentle one. Hornbill is correctly named, as the rufous-necked hornbill is easily visible here.

Day 17: Hornbill Glade – Bulbulia – Ranijheel - Bulbulia

An early start is recommended on this day.

While moving to Bulbulia, you will notice the terrain getting more undulating with streams flowing across it. There is thick vegetation on the way. Birding is one of the most satisfying on this stretch. Bulbulia offers a spectacular sight of a large aquifer below with many natural springs (bulbule). The place derives its name from here only. From Bulbulia, take the track to Ranijheel. On the way, you face some steep slopes on muddy paths. Trail is also broken at places but is walkable. After walking for 3 kms, you enter a thick and long bamboo patch. Be careful of the wild elephants. It is wise to stay close to your forest guard. You will also come across a multitude of magnificent birds here. Stumbling across the Ranijheel will take you to the area of white-winged wood duck.

Day 18: Bulbulia – Deban

We cross the Namdapha River to complete a circuit back to Deban via camera point. Spend the night at the Forest Rest House/ tented camps at Deban.

Day 19: Namdapha – Dibru-Saikhowa NP, 215 km/ 6 hours

We drive to Guijan Ghat on the banks of the Brahmaputra River passing the city of Tinsukia. We check into a simple eco-lodge that will be our base to explore the reserve. After checking in, we take a walk along the banks of the great river – the surroundings are varied and interesting. In the immediate vicinity is the ghat or the river jetty with wooden boats used by the locals. As you walk away from the river, you come upon a tea garden and as you look to the north you can see the outline of the great Himalayan range. Birds are always there to surprise and please you as you walk along.

Day 20: Dibru-Saikhowa NP

We take a motorized boat sailing upstream to get to one of the many islands that form the park. Keep an eye out for the river dolphins that pop out of the water from time to time. Disembark and go birding through tall grass and open areas. We return to our base and this time sail downstream to another island. In the afternoon, we walk a short distance to a 'beel' or marshy water body and jump on to small canoes rowed by village lads – going slowly across these marshes you can spot numerous ducks, swamp hens, storks, egrets, herons. As the marshes are close to villages, you can see fishing nets on the edges and experience village life too if you desire to explore it.

Birds to be seen (more than 300 species recorded): marsh babbler, black-throated parrotbill, rufous-vented (swamp) prinia, pale-capped pigeon, white-tailed ruby-throat and black-breasted thrush, white-browed piculet, streak-throated woodpecker, lineated barbet, oriental pied hornbill, green-billed malkoha, grey-headed lapwing, pallas's gull, grey-headed fish eagle, oriental hobby, lesser adjutant, common green magpie, white-tailed rubythroat, jerdon's bushchat, spot-winged starling, hill myna, sultan tit, plain martin, yellow-bellied prinia, pale-footed bush warbler,

chestnut-crowned bush warbler, spotted bush warbler, dusky warbler, smoky warbler, rufous-fronted babbler, chestnut-capped babbler, jerdon's babbler, sand lark, scarlet-backed flower-pecker, ruby-cheeked sunbird, crimson sunbird, rosy pipit, and black-faced bunting.

Day 21 (February 26, 2013): Dibru-Saikhowa NP – Dibrugarh airport

Transfer to Dibrugarh airport for flight to Delhi/ Amsterdam.

Tour Ends

Price

Tour price: INR 197,500 per person (2 people traveling together)

Restricted Area Permit for Arunachal Pradesh (USD 50 per person) extra.

Price Includes: Accommodation on single room basis at the indicated places; all meals; transfers and sightseeing as per itinerary by one AC Tata Sumo (SUV); entry fees; birding guide cum escort throughout the tour; local guides where necessary; taxes.

Price does not Include: Air/ train fare to from Guwahati/Dibrugarh; tips; drinks; laundry; telephone calls; travel/ personal insurance; camera fees; expenses of personal nature.