



## Birding Western Rajasthan and Gujarat

Best time to visit: November – February

13 days Delhi – Bikaner – Jaisalmer – Kumbhalgarh – Mount Abu – Little Rann of Kutch – Nakhatrana (near Bhuj) - Bhuj

### Highlights

A tour for keen birders with a focus on several sought-after species. With the help of an experienced bird guide you'll look for Great Indian Bustard in the Desert National Park and Yellow-eyed Pigeon around Gajner Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), then on to Kumbhalgarh and Mount Abu areas in search of White-naped Tit, White-bellied Minivet and Green Avadavat.

In Gujarat, India's most westerly State, you will spend time exploring the Little Rann of Kutch. Species here can include Pallid Scops Owl, Sykes's Nightjar and Macqueen's Bustard. Sociable Lapwing can sometimes be seen in agricultural areas. Other local avian delights include Indian Courser, both Oriental and Small Pratincoles and large flocks of Common and Demoiselle Cranes sharing their arid home with the attractive and range-restricted Asiatic Wild Ass as an added bonus. Finally you'll drive to the Nakhatrana area and explore the Great Rann. Visit Fulay to look for Grey Hypocolius and another chance to see White-naped Tit and White-bellied Minivet. Indian Eagle Owl, several species of raptor, larks and wheatears are all likely. Time spent by the coast should add Crab Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Pallas's Gull and perhaps even Great Knot.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Flight** (excluded, but easily booked via the internet or a travel agent)

**Day 2: Delhi – night on the train to Bikaner**

Meals: Breakfast

Arrive at New Delhi airport mid morning where you will be welcomed by your guide and driver who will stay with you for the duration of the tour. You'll be taken to a local hotel for breakfast, then drive to Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary for a few hours to search for Brooks's Leaf Warbler, Indian Courser and a wealth of waterbirds. Sind Sparrow has been recorded here in the past. Then you'll drive back to Old Delhi train station in plenty of time to board the Awadh Assam Express to Bikaner, departing at 1625 hours. Night in 2<sup>nd</sup> class air-conditioned sleeper (blanket, sheet and pillow provided).

**Day 3: Bikaner - Jaisalmer**

Meals: Breakfast

Your train is due to arrive in Bikaner at 0545 hours and from here you'll be taken to Gajner Palace for breakfast. You'll spend some time birding around Gajner Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) for our next target species, Yellow-eyed Pigeon. Then you'll take a leisurely drive of 5 – 6 hours to Jaisalmer passing Kheechan en-route where, in the morning and evening during the winter months, local people feed up to 5,000 Demoiselle Cranes; an amazing spectacle. Arrive at Jaisalmer and check in to your hotel.

**Day 4: Jaisalmer**

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

After breakfast you'll spend some time birding around Lake Gadisar and elsewhere locally, including Ludarwa. Species might include Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Asian Desert Whitethroat (split from Lesser), Orphean Warbler, House Bunting, various Wheatears, Imperial Eagle and other birds of prey. Later in the afternoon, after obtaining your permits for the Desert National Park, you'll set off (around 17.00hrs) for the Sand Dunes of Sam where it is possible to see both Desert and Red Fox. This evening you'll stay at a safari camp in the desert.

**Day 5: Jaisalmer (Desert National Park)**

Meals: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner



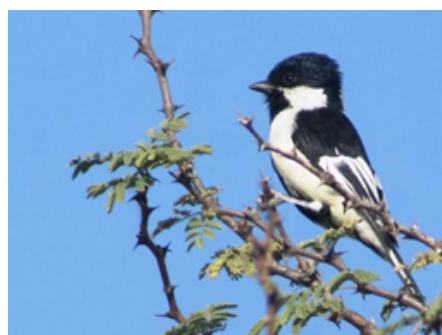
Great Indian Bustard © J Tiwari



White-bellied Minivet ©J Tiwari



Grey Hypocolius ©J Geeson



White-naped Tit ©J Tiwari



Indian Courser ©J Thomas

After early breakfast, and taking a packed lunch with you, you'll drive to the Desert National Park for a full day of birding. The target species here is Great Indian Bustard and your guide will also be looking for Stoliczka's Bushchat, Cream-coloured Courser, Greater Hoopoe Lark, Lesser-spotted, Bonelli's, Tawny and Short-toed Eagles. Trumpeter Finch, Rufous-fronted Prinia, Rufous-tailed Wheatear and Desert Lark are all seen locally. Return to your safari camp for dinner and spend another night here.

#### Day 6: Jaisalmer – Kumbhalgarh (via Jodhpur)

Meals: Breakfast and dinner

After early breakfast drive to Kumbhalgarh (approx. 7 hours) stopping on the way to search for the rare and endangered Green Avadavat and for lunch (payable directly). Other species to look out for include White-capped and Crested Buntings, Painted Francolin, White-naped Woodpecker and Sulphur-bellied Warbler, to name just a few. Arrive at Kumbhalgarh in the Aravalli Hills and check in at your hotel.

#### Day 7: Kumbhalgarh – Mount Abu

Meals: Breakfast and dinner

Visit Kumbhalgarh WLS before breakfast, where you can see many species including Green Avadavat, White-bellied Minivet, Tawny-bellied and Yellow-eyed Babblers. Grey Junglefowl and Red Spurfowl are also found here. After a late breakfast you'll be driven to Mount Abu (approx. 4 hours). Depending on the time you might have lunch (payable directly) on the way or on arrival at your hotel. Check-in at your hotel, then explore the hills of Abu looking for White-naped Tit, Green Avadavat and more common species including Black-lored Tit, Oriental White-eye, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Brown-headed Barbet and Greater Coucal. Night at your hotel.

#### Day 8: Mount Abut – Little Rann of Kutch

Meals: Breakfast, lunch en-route at local restaurant, dinner

After breakfast, drive (approx. 5 hours) to Dasada, on the eastern edge of the Little Rann of Kutch. Life looks tough here in the heart of the Rann, a vast, desert-like salt plain which gets progressively hotter and drier until the onset of the monsoon and is then inundated by both rain and sea. It's hard to see how animals and people alike can survive this harsh environment. Check in at your safari lodge and if time permits your guide will take you birding locally around the resort where you might see Wire-tailed Swallow, Indian Courser and many other species of dry open habitats. Pallid Scops Owl is sometimes seen in the lodge grounds.

#### Day 9: Little Rann of Kutch

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

On this day enjoy morning and afternoon jeep safaris into the Little Rann for birding and to see the rare Asiatic Wild Ass (Onager). You could be rewarded with views of Macqueen's Bustard, Lesser and Greater Flamingos, Small and Oriental Pratincoles, Great White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Montagu's and Pallid Harriers. Sociable Lapwing is sometimes seen in nearby fields. Rosy Starlings congregate around the villages depending on the time of year. In the evening you'll head out locally again looking for crepuscular and nocturnal species which include Sykes's and Savanna Nightjars. Night at your safari lodge.

#### Day 10: Little Rann of Kutch – Nakhatrana area

Meals: Breakfast, lunch en route at local restaurant and dinner at guest house

After breakfast drive to Nakhatrana (5 hours). En-route you may stop along the Gulf of Kutch where Crab Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover and Terek Sandpiper can be seen. Continue driving for a further 30 minutes to Nakhatrana. Arrive at Nakhatrana and check in at local guest house.

Accommodation is basic but comfortable, vegetarian food is served here (no alcohol). After lunch you'll start searching for some of the key species found locally, including Marshall's lora, and have another opportunity to look for White-naped Tit. Over the next couple of days you should have a chance of catching up with Stoliczka's Bushchat, if you didn't come across it in the Desert National Park. Night at your guest house.

#### Day 11: Nakhatrana area



Lesser Spotted Eagle © J Geeson



Green Avadavat © J Tiwari



Pallid Scops Owl © M Mallik



Asiatic Wild Ass © R Woods



Marshall's lora © J Tiwari

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

After an early breakfast depart to the Fulay area (a 30 minute drive), with packed lunch, to see some rare bird species, including Grey Hypocolius at their only regular wintering site in India. You should see at least six species of raptor and many more birds around Chhari Dhandh, close to Fulay and Banni grasslands. In the afternoon you'll be taken to visit the coast for another opportunity to look for Crab Plover, Terek and Broad-billed Sandpipers, Slender-billed, Pallas's, Brown-headed and Heuglin's Gulls. Other species not previously mentioned and often seen include Lesser-crested and Caspian Terns, Kentish Plover and Great Knot. Return to your guest house and have dinner.

#### Day 12: Nakhatrana – Naliya/Lala Bustard Sanctuary - Nakhatrana

Meals: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

Today you will drive (approx. 1 hour) to Naliya grasslands and the Lala Bustard Sanctuary. It is becoming increasingly difficult to see Great Indian Bustard, in Gujarat, but you'll be in suitable habitat which also holds Bimaculated Lark, Long-legged Buzzard, Fan-tailed Warbler and many others as well as Indian Gazelle (Chinkara). Enjoy your packed lunch and spend a further afternoon in suitable habitat for Marshall's Iora, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Painted Sandgrouse, Indian Bushlark, White-bellied and Small Minivets, You might see House and Grey-necked Buntings, too, while visits to specific sites could yield Sirkeer Malkoha, Indian Eagle-Owl, Indian Nightjar and another opportunity to catch up with Sykes's Nightjar. Return to your guest house for dinner.

#### Day 13: Nakhatrana - Bhuj

Meals: Breakfast

After breakfast you'll be driven (approx. 1 hour) to Bhuj airport where you will say goodbye to your guide and take Jet Airways flight no. 9W 2534 to Mumbai (excluded from the price and for you to book directly). In Mumbai connect to your international flight home (excluded from the price).

**Tour ends.**

Price per person (valid till 31 March 2012) on twin-share basis:

For two travelling: £1615 per person

For four travelling: £1275 per person

Single room supplement: £180

Approximate cost of internal flight (excluded from the price and for you to book directly – take as approx. price as cost can vary on a daily basis): £70

Supplements may apply for the Christmas/New Year period (20<sup>th</sup> December – 5<sup>th</sup> January). Please enquire for details.

See next page for inclusions and exclusions.

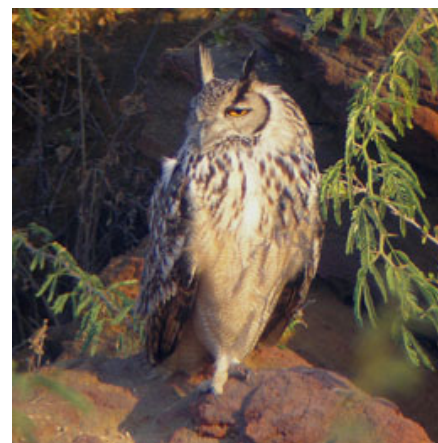
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Sykes's Nightjar © J Tiwari



Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse  
© J Thomas



Indian Eagle-Owl © J Geeson

Place	Standard	No. of nights
Jaisalmer	Golden Haveli, Standard Room, B & B	1
Near Desert National Park	Desert Safari Camp (Prithvi Pal Singh's Camp), Full Board	2
Kumbhalgarh	Aodhi Castle, Standard Room, B & D	1
Mount Abu	Udaigarh Palace, Standard Room, B & D	1
Little Rann of Kutch	Rann Riders, AC Standard Room, Full Board	2
Nakhatrana	CEDO Camp, Standard Room, Full Board	3

**Price includes:**

Accommodation in the above mentioned hotels.  
Meals as per itinerary  
Air-conditioned vehicle for all transfers mentioned in the above itinerary.  
Accompanying birding naturalist from Day 2 till Day 13.  
2<sup>nd</sup> class air-conditioned sleeper train from Delhi to Bikaner.  
1 night safari by jeep and full day camel cart safari at Desert National Park.  
2 jeep safaris at Little Rann of Kutch.  
2 full day and 1 half day jeep for birding and wildlife viewing in the Nakhatrana area.  
Services of additional bird guide with local knowledge in the Nakhatrana area  
All entrances to National Parks and sanctuaries visited as per the itinerary  
Permit charges and other miscellaneous charges to acquire permit for Desert National Park.  
All currently applicable taxes.  
Pre-travel information including how to apply for your tourist visa.

**Price excludes:**

International flight to/from India including International airport tax. This tax is often included in the ticket price, but please check.  
Internal flight – see flight supplement for indication of cost.  
Tourist visa and travel insurance.  
Meals that are not listed above.  
Camera and camcorder fee where this is not included in park/monument entrance fee.  
Any increase in entrance fees as per Government of India notifications in future or any additional taxes levied by the Government of India on the tourism sector in future.  
Any expenses of a personal nature such as hard/soft drinks, laundry, phone/fax calls, tips etc.  
Any item not mentioned in the above inclusions

Cost incidental to any change in the itinerary or stay on account of flight cancellation due to bad weather, ill health, roadblocks and/or any other factors beyond our control.

**How to book**

The booking of this itinerary is with Wild About Travel Limited and their booking terms and conditions apply. Please contact Jo Thomas at Wild About Travel ([jo@wildabouttravel.co.uk](mailto:jo@wildabouttravel.co.uk)) / 01480-370593 to register your interest.

To confirm your booking please complete the booking form and send a 25% deposit by £ sterling cheque payable to Wild About Travel via the Wild About Travel Office, 25 Sapley Road, Hartford, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 1YG.

Remaining balance to reach Wild About Travel at least 40 days before tour commencement by £ sterling cheque made payable to Wild About Travel.

**For any help or advice please call or email Wild About Travel and we would be happy to assist.**

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Crab Plovers © N Sant