NORTHERN INDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Tigers, Taj & Birds

February 1 - 20, 2027

"I do not know how the close proximity of a tiger reacts on others,
but for me it is always with a breathless feeling"

Jim Corbett in "The Maneaters of Kumaon"

An indelible view of Northern India - its people, history, and wildlife. This is a journey that spans the semi-arid lowlands fringing the Thar Desert to the spectacular Himalayas, focusing on the premier nature reserves and cultural assets that define this remarkable region. Beyond its superb birdlife, there is a very good chance to observe wild Tigers, as well as Leopard, Sloth Bear, and Asian Elephant.

Our journey begins in the capital, New Delhi, after which we travel to Rajasthan and stay at the luxurious Taj Vivanta Sawai Madhupur Lodge, a former Royal Hunting retreat, enabling access to Ranthambore National Park - renowned for its Tigers. It is widely regarded as one of the best places in the country to observe these majestic predators. We will spend three full days enjoying morning and afternoon safari drives in one of India's most famous Tiger reserves. The low hills and varied topography host a variety of habitats and a range of great birds. Among the local specialties we look forward to spotting are Painted Spurfowl, Jungle Bush-Quail, and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Our next destination is the famed bird sanctuary, Keoladeo National Park (aka Bharatpur). Our base at Club Mahindra Bharatpur provides a beautifully restored heritage property from which to explore this world-class wetland reserve and the surrounding areas in comfort. The birding is exceptional, with a host of nearby locations, including the National Chambal (Gharial) Wildlife Sanctuary, providing the chance for sightings of such rarities as Sarus Crane, Black-necked Stork, Indian Skimmer, Indian Spotted Eagle, and (historically) the critically endangered Sociable Plover.

Local guides often have a variety of owls such as Dusky Eagle-Owl and Indian Scops-Owl staked out. Our visit is timed for the maximum number of winter visitors like Bar-headed Goose,

Common Crane, and Bluethroat. This is a great birding location, and it is quite possible to see over 100 species in a single day.

We will, of course, visit the iconic Taj Mahal, one of the great architectural & historical wonders of the world. There can be no finer way to experience this monument to love, than by the light of a beautiful sunrise. We have a full day in Agra to explore some of the fascinating historical sites, that echo a Story of the Mughal Empire. These include the Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort and Tomb of Akbar the Great.

And continuing our journey to Corbett National Park, nestled in the eastern Himalayan foothills. It is one of India's great National Parks. With over 550 species on the park list and an incredible 50 species of raptors. We have two full days to explore this location via jeep safari, to take advantage of the outstanding birdwatching opportunities, alongside its renowned megafauna. Some of the special birds we may encounter include Great Hornbill, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Brown Fish-Owl, Pallas's Fish-Eagle and Collared Falconet (to name a few). The monotypic Ibisbill and Wallcreeper also count amongst the regulars. Herds of Asian Elephants are a major feature, and there is always the chance for a Tiger encounter.

The final leg of our journey focuses on the higher elevations. We spend a night at the Vatsyayana Himalayan Resort (around 2,000 meters above sea level), a boutique luxury retreat perched in the village of Manila, offering breathtaking views of the world's highest mountain range, including the peaks of Trishul, Nandadevi and Panchachuli. This region represents our best opportunity to observe some of the scarce Himalayan endemics such as Cheer Pheasant, Nepal Cupwing, and Pink-browed Rosefinch.

We also visit the Sattal district, where the hilly terrain and forested slopes host a wealth of avian gems. Hill Partridge, Himalayan Woodpecker, Slaty-headed Parakeet, Great Barbet, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Golden Bush Robin, Scaly-breasted Cupwing, Chestnut-headed Tesia, and Green-tailed Sunbird, amongst those we will be targeting. A final full day of birding promises to be a memorable conclusion to this epic adventure.

Excellent to very good accommodations throughout; travel by coach (fully air-conditioned), jeep, and train. Being the northern hemisphere winter period the climate, in general, is very pleasant

to warm in the middle of the day, and cool to sometimes cold in the early morning and at night, particularly in the mountains.

February 1 & 2, Day 1 & 2: Travel to New Delhi

Most flights from the United States connect with flights bound for New Delhi that typically arrive late the next day. If time permits, we suggest arriving a day early to allow for potential flight delays and to be well rested. VENT will be happy to assist with additional lodging arrangements and transfers should you choose to arrive prior to February 2. Upon arriving at New Delhi's Indira Ghandi International Airport (airport code DEL), you will be met by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to our hotel. The evening, we will gather as a group with our tour leaders in the hotel lobby at **6:30 p.m**. **on February 2,** for introductions and a welcome dinner.

NIGHT (February 1): Aboard aircraft in transit to New Delhi

NIGHT (February 2): Roseate House, New Delhi

February 3, Day 3: Drive from Delhi to Ranthambor

Following breakfast, we depart Delhi for a 5–6-hour drive south. In the process we get our first glimpse of real India, a fascinating and, at times, confronting experience. The impossibly congested cityscape eventually gives way to mud-walled villages and reservoirs teeming with birds, while women gracefully adorned in silk saris collect buffalo dung to be dried and used as cooking fuel. This is another world - one that barely appears to acknowledge the passage of time and never fails to totally overwhelm the first-time visitor. Perhaps one of the most salutary impressions is that birds are everywhere, truly a tribute to the Hindu reverence for animal life. As we venture deeper into the countryside and enter the fabled desert state of Rajasthan, on approach to our destination - Ranthambore National Park, we cannot help but be captivated as we pass camel carts, mud-brick villages and elegantly attired men and women. We will of course

make stops along the way for anything of interest before checking in (and lunch) at our luxury lodging.

The Sawai Madhupur is a heritage property located on the verge of Ranthambore National Park. It is in fact a former Royal Hunting Lodge that offers both modern facilities and historic features, including original artwork and artifacts alluding to its majestic past. There is also an extensive garden area with the opportunity for some relaxed, casual birding onsite. In addition to the wetland varieties (depending on water levels) some of the regulars we can expect to see here would include Grey Francolin, Asian Green Bee-eater, Rufous Treepie, Jungle Babbler and Purple Sunbird. If time permits, this afternoon, we may venture further afield.

NIGHT: Sawai Madhopur Lodge, Ranthambore

Recent surveys estimate 60-70 Tigers reside in Ranthambore National Park. Photo S Baker

February 4-6, Days 4, 5 & 6: Ranthambore National Park

Ranthambore National Park is one of India's most famous Tiger Reserves and, one of the best places, anywhere - to see a wild Tiger. We have three full days to explore the range of habitats and rugged landscapes and visit some of the centuries-old forts and temples scattered throughout the park. Our schedule will involve morning and afternoon jeep safaris where we

have a very good chance for an encounter with the most feared and revered predator on the planet.

Nestled between the Vindhya and Aravali hill ranges and located near to the outer fringes of the Thar Desert, Ranthambore presents a typically arid setting dominated by tropical dry open deciduous woodland and thorn scrub and the drought resistant Dhok Tree. This expansive terrain also includes grasslands, rocky outcrops and perennial lakes, supporting a rich and distinctive fauna. Tigers get much of the attention, but this is also the realm of the Indian Leopard, Striped Hyena, Golden Jackal and unmistakable Sloth Bear, inspiration for 'Baloo' in Rudyard Kiplings classic: The Jungle Book.

With a bird list of over 300 species, there will of course be many opportunities to pursue some of the many avian highlights as well. In the dry country we will search for Painted Spurfowl, Jungle Bush Quail, Painted & Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Sirkeer Malkoha, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Barred Buttonquail, Indian Courser, Dusky Crag Martin, Crested Bunting and Variable and Desert wheatears. White-eyed Buzzard is possible, in addition to Egyptian, Red-headed, White-rumped and Indian Vultures – likely perched or patrolling the skies overhead. Brown Fish Owl, Indian Scops Owl and Mottled Wood Owl (rare) are amongst the potential nocturnal offerings.

NIGHTS: Sawai Madhopur Lodge, Ranthambore

February 7, Day 7: Drive to Bharatpur (Keoladeo National Park)

Following breakfast we relocate to the city of Bharatpur. It is a 4–5-hour journey that takes us further east, but still within the state of Rajasthan, close to the border of Utter Pradesh. Historically it was the capitol of the Jat Kingdom but these days, most notable, as the gateway to the Keoladeo National Park/ Bird Sanctuary, a wetland of international importance for migratory waterfowl - declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985.

Our accommodation will be at the Club Mahindra Bharatpur (previously The Bagh), which is a beautifully restored heritage property set on a 40-acre, 19th-century private garden, providing the perfect vantage. 'An enchanting realm of quiet luxury, only 5 minutes' drive from the park entrance.

After check-in and lunch there will be an opportunity for some birding that afternoon.

Keoladeo National Park was the private hunting reserve of the Maharajas of Bharatpur. It was developed in the late 19th century by creating small dams and bunds in a natural low-lying marshland to collect rainwater, which in turn was fed by an irrigation canal. Over the years the lakes attracted great numbers of waterfowl. Part of the park lies underwater, the extent and volume depending on the intensity of the monsoon rains. The remaining park is covered in dry deciduous forests and extensive grasslands. On the raised ground outlining the wetlands grow a profusion of Acacia trees, where the residents' waterbirds nest, often in large mixed colonies. It is also an excellent place to watch mammals like Golden Jackal, Striped Hyena, Fishing Cat, Jungle Cat, Nilgai, Sambar, Blackbuck and Wild Boar.

NIGHT: Club Mahindra Bharatpur, Bharatpur

Sunset on the marshes of Keoladeo National Park. Photo S Baker

February 8-9, Day 8 & 9: Birding Bharatpur (Keoladeo National Park)

Bharatpur (Keoladeo National Park) is one of the last major undisturbed wetlands remaining in north-central India. It is of critical importance to huge numbers and a wide variety of Palaearctic waterbirds wintering in the subcontinent. In addition, it supports important nesting colonies of Painted and Asian Openbill Storks. Although they will not be in peak nesting at the time of our visit, these Storks are resident throughout most of the year, feeding on the rich pickings provided by the reserve's protected water supply.

In addition to its wonderful wetlands, Bharatpur encompasses areas of tall woodland and low semi-arid scrub. These habitats support an incredible assemblage of birds. This includes the elusive Spotted Creeper (at least historically…), Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Eurasian Wryneck, Dusky Eagle-Owl, Small Minivet, scarce Marshall's Iora, Orange-headed Thrush, and the scarce Brook's Leaf-Warbler, to mention a few. It is quite possible we will record well over 100 species of birds daily in the Bharatpur area.

During two full days, we hope to see Indian and Little cormorant, Sarus and Common crane, four species of egret, Purple Heron, Black Bittern, Painted and Black-necked stork, Black-headed and Red-naped ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Graylag and Bar-headed goose, Garganey, Red-crested and Common pochard, Ferruginous and Comb duck, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Shikra and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. Wintering raptors are a major feature of Bharatpur. It is possible to see Steppe, Eastern Imperial, Greater Spotted and the rare Indian Spotted eagle in a single day. Other likely raptors include Short-toed Eagle, Red-headed Vulture and Pallid Harrier. More secretive or elusive waterbirds we hope to locate include Painted Snipe, Brown Crake and White-tailed Lapwing.

NIGHT: Club Mahindra Bharatpur, Bharatpur

February 10, Day 10: Drive to Chambal River and onward to Agra

Today, departing Bharatpur. The first stop will be the National Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary- in Dholpur. A boat tour of the Chambal River is guaranteed to be a highlight. The river is ranked amongst the most pristine and unpolluted waterways in India - a unique opportunity to explore a freshwater habitat that is home to populations of several sought-after and endangered species such as Indian Skimmer, Black-bellied Tern, Ganges River Dolphin, Red-crowned Roofed Turtle and Gharial (a fresh-water crocodile). In addition, we may hope to see Bar-headed Goose, Great Stone-Curlew, River Lapwing, Small Pratincole, Pallas's Gull, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle and White-browed Wagtail. The sanctuary was founded in 1978 and is part of a large area co-administered by Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, within an area of 3350 square miles. Approximately 250 miles of the river is within the reserve.

Chambal River is 1 of the last strongholds for the endangered Indian Skimmer. Photo S Baker

We will have lunch nearby, at the opulent Raj Niwas Palace. Later, that afternoon, we will continue our journey (around one hour drive) towards Agra, with birding stops along the way. There are many options in this respect.

The historic city of Agra, perched on the bank of the Yamuna River, is the fourth most populous city in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is also, arguably, one of the most important cultural and

historical sites on the subcontinent. From the early 16th century Agra was the capital of the Mughal Empire, hosting the Emperors Babur, Humayum, Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan - whose controversial reign left a legacy of grand structures, including (most famously) the Taj Mahal – a masterpiece of Moghul architecture.

Our stay at the centrally located Tajview Hotel in Agra provides an excellent base, offering the flexibility to enjoy additional sightseeing or shopping should time permit.

NIGHT: Tajview Hotel, Agra

February 11, Day 11: Full day of the historic city of Agra

We can look forward to a full day in Agra, with a focus on the extraordinary cultural assets. Our day begins with an early morning visit to the iconic Taj Mahal. Watching the sun rise on a misty morning from this epic monument to love is one of those unforgettable and unmissable experiences.

Taj Mahal is one of the 7 'wonders of the world'

The Taj Mahal, often cited alongside the Great Wall of China and Machu Picchu among the world's wonders, was commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved consort Mumtaz Mahal. Crafted from pure white marble, this mausoleum is an architectural marvel. Construction began in 1631 and was completed in 1653, with roughly 20,000 artisans and workers contributing to the project. The Taj Mahal is widely regarded as the finest example of Mughal architecture, a synthesis of Persian, Turkish, Indian, and Islamic influences. While the white domed mausoleum is its most famous feature, the Taj Mahal is part of an integrated complex of structures. Ustad Ahmad Lahori is generally regarded as the principal designer.

From the Taj's vantage point overlooking the Yamuna River, the area offers productive birding opportunities. Likely species include Bar-headed Goose, Knob-billed Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Little Swift, Pied Avocet, River Lapwing, River Tern, Asian Woolly-necked Stork, Eurasian Spoonbill, and Brown-headed Barbet.

There will, of course, be opportunities to savor the local Mughlai cuisine, and time to explore some Mughal-era sites at a relaxed, contemplative pace. A full day can easily be devoted to this subject, including visits to Agra Fort and the Tomb of Akbar.

Agra Fort - Built by Emperor Akbar, the maze of courtyards, mosques and private chambers of the fort echo the Story of the Mughal Empire. Construction of massive Agra Fort begun by Emperor Akbar in 1565, and additions were made until the time of his grandson, Shah Jahan. While in Akbar's time, the fort was principally a military Structure, by Shah Jahan's time the fort had become partially a palace.

Tomb of Akbar – is a sandstone/marble mausoleum holding the mortal remains of Moghul Emperor Akbar (son of Humayum), who reigned from 1556-1605. Akbar, aka 'Akbar the Great' is considered one of the greatest Emperors in India's history, helping to regain and consolidate territory from north-central India, and beyond.

We will return that evening, for a sunset visit to the Taj Mahal.

NIGHT: Tajview Hotel, Agra

February 12, Day 12: Drive to Corbett

We require an early start, driving from Agra to Corbett National Park, approximately 200 miles to the north-east. It is a 6–7-hour drive, making this primarily a day of travel.

The journey takes us northwards, across the vast Gangetic Plain, the very core of Hindu India and the most populous part of this nation of over one billion people. In addition to providing plenty of opportunity for seeing a good cross section of open country birds, it will also provide a window on the life of everyday India.

We will arrive in Ramnagar (gateway to Corbett National Park) and cradled in the foothills of the Himalayas. This marks a transition to 1 of the most diverse and exciting biogeographical zones on the planet. The Himalayas are the world's highest mountain range, stretching 1500 miles, separating the low-lying plains of the Indian Subcontinent from the Tibetan Plateau.

If time permits, we will visit the Giriji Devi Temple on the Kosi River, a site for two key targets in this area: the Ibisbill and Wallcreeper – both representing monotypic families. The fast-flowing river is also a habitat for Pied Kingfisher, Crested Kingfisher, Brown Dipper, as well as Plumbeous & White-capped Water Redstarts.

We have three nights at Jim's Jungle Retreat. This very comfortable and highly rated lodging is situated on a 15-acre property ideally located at the southern edge of the National Park and close to the park entrance.

NIGHT: Jim's Jungle Retreat, Ramnagar, Corbett Tiger Reserve

February 13-14, Days 13 & 14: Corbett National Park

The stillness is broken by the raucous bugle of an advertising peacock as the mists part to reveal a new day. Corbett spans over 200 square miles of magnificent deciduous forest and grassland, at elevations ranging from 1,300 to 4,000 feet, occupying a series of ridges around the Ramganga River. The dam, which forms Ramganga Lake at the park's western boundary, is a haven for wildlife

and attracts large mammals such as Asian Elephant, Spotted Deer, Sambar, and Wild Boar, along with their predators—Leopard and the magnificent Tiger. This classic tract of wild India has a special beauty vividly described in *The Maneaters of Kumaon* and other works by Jim Corbett, for whom the park is named.

In winter, the Himalayas' snows drive large numbers of birds to lower elevations, where they join the resident avifauna to form one of northern India's richest bird communities. Corbett also harbors a plethora of mammals. In addition to those mentioned above, other mammals include Jungle and Fishing cats, Sloth Bear, Himalayan Black Bear, the striking Yellow-throated Marten, Indian Crested Porcupine, and both Nepal Sacred Langur and Rhesus Macaque.

Indian Elephant herd on the move - Ramganga Plain, Corbett National Park. Photo S Baker

A list of some 550 bird species recorded in the park offers ample options for even the most ardent lister, and our days here will be filled with many new and exciting sights and sounds. Possible avian encounters include Black Stork; the magnificent but increasingly rare Pallas's Fish-Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Changeable, Rufous-bellied, and Mountain Hawk-Eagles, Black Francolin - a sharply plumed bird best seen at dawn when the male calls from exposed tree stumps at the grassland edge, Red Junglefowl, Kalij Pheasant, River Lapwing, Eurasian Thick-knee, the elusive Great Thick-knee, Red-collared Dove, Emerald Dove, Lesser Coucal, Slaty-headed, Red-breasted, Plum-headed, and possibly Alexandrine parakeets, Crested Treeswift, Himalayan Swiftlet, Brown-backed Needletail,

both Brown and Tawny Fish-owls, Jungle Owlet, and with a bit of luck, the sparsely distributed Blue-bearded Bee-eater. We may also see Oriental Pied and the astonishing Great Hornbill, Lineated, Brown-headed, Blue-throated, and Coppersmith barbets, Streak-throated, Gray-headed, Fulvous-breasted, and Gray-capped woodpeckers, Oriental Skylark, Gray-throated Martin, Large Wood-Shrike, Large Cuckoo-shrike, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Small Minivet, Common Iora, Black-crested and Ashy Bulbuls, Chestnut-capped and Yellow-eyed Babblers, Rufous-gorgeted and Slaty-blue flycatchers, White-throated Fantail; Gray-breasted Prinia; Tickell's Leaf and Smoky warblers; Indian Robin; Black-throated Thrush, Little and Spotted Forktails, and Chestnut-bellied and Velvet-fronted Nuthatches. Also present are Gray-backed and Long-tailed Shrikes, Black-hooded Oriole, Hair-crested Drongo, Chestnut-tailed and Spot-winged Starlings, Jungle Myna, Green Magpie, Rufous and Gray Treepies, Oriental White-eye, Red Avadavat, Common Rosefinch, and Chestnut-eared and Crested Buntings.

NIGHTS: Jim's Jungle Retreat, Ramnagar, Corbett Tiger Reserve

February 15, Day 15: Drive Corbett to Manila

After breakfast we depart Corbett (with a packed lunch) and commence the 2–3-hour ascent to the picturesque village of Manila. This is a tiny hamlet, steeped in folklore and nestled in the wooded hills of Uttarakhand. At an elevation of 1850 meters above sea level, it is still well below the 'alpine zone' but the location does offer panoramic views of the Himalayan Range, including the snow-capped peaks of Trishul, Nandadevi and Panchachuli.

Manila is also an important cultural site, being the spiritual home of Manila Devi, the family goddess of the Katyuri clan, from where the region got its name.

In addition to the magical scenery, pristine environment, and clean air, the area hosts a remarkable suite of endemic and range-restricted birds. At the top of the list are three pheasants—Kalij, Koklass, and the much rarer Cheer Pheasant. We have an excellent chance of encountering all of these beauties

The drive up the mountain will present further opportunities for Nepal Cupwing, Scaly-breasted Cupwing, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Small Niltava, Spotted Forktail, Long-billed Thrush and Collared Falconet. There are also back-up sites for Ibisbill and Wallcreeper, if these are still required.

We have two nights at the boutique Vatsyayana Resort, which promises a sublime, restful and luxurious lodging, and quite possibly, the best views in the world.

NIGHT: Vatsyayana Resort, Manila Range in Tota am

February 16, Day 16: Full day in Manila

We have a day to explore this remarkable region and can expect a few additions to the list. The abundance, diversity, and boldness of the Himalayan avifauna is something that cannot be ignored.

Following breakfast (and taking a moment to enjoy the sunrise in the Himalayas), the birding will begin. Some of our targets for this day would include the Slaty-headed & Plum-headed Parakeets, which are the common *Psittaculas* at this elevation. Woodpeckers are also well represented with Brown-fronted, Rufous-bellied, Scaly-bellied, Grey-fronted, Grey-headed and Himalayan, all residing locally. We will pay close attention to mixed species foraging flocks, particularly at this time of year, with a chance of Black-headed Jay, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Grey Treepie, Black-throated Bushtit, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Grey-winged Blackbird, Black-throated Thrush, Himalayan Bluetail, Golden Bush Robin, Pink-browed, Common & Dark-breasted Rosefinch (amongst many others).

The afternoon will be spent birding in the Maulekhal area, before returning to the hotel.

NIGHT: Vatsyayana Resort, Manila Range in Tota am

Plum-headed Parakeet are a common inhabitant of the hill country. Photo S Baker

February 17, Day 17: Drive from Manila to Sattai -Bhimtal (via Sat Tal)

Our destination for this day is the lake city of Bhimtal, about 100 miles southeast of Manila. Located in the montane zone but at a slightly lower elevation (around 1,300 meters), Bhimtal is a popular travel destination, renowned for Bhimtal Lake, historic temples, and lively street markets. For our purposes, Bhimtal provides an ideal base with easy access to the bird-rich hills of Sat Tal and the Nainital district.

The 3–4-hour journey will be a slow and careful navigation. The winding mountain roads provide some spectacular scenic photo-ops and birdwatching stops along the way. All these sites are connected and related and part of the Himalayan bioregion, but the slightly different habitat and elevation will improve our prospects for certain species. This category would include the Hill Partridge and Rufous-throated Partridge, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Yellow-browed Tit, Himalayan Prinia, Ashy-throated & Buff-barred Warbler, Blue-winged Minla, Red-billed Leiothrix, White-tailed Nuthatch and Altai Accentor, in addition to the striking and range-restricted, Black-

faced Warbler. Striated, Chestnut-crowned, and Rufous-throated Laughingthrush, are all Himalayan endemics that are more likely to be encountered at this location.

Two nights at the deluxe Rosefinch Sarovar Portico, with balcony views of Bhimtal Lake, will be the perfect venue for this final leg of the tour.

NIGHT: Rosefinch Sarovar Portico, Bhimtal

February 18, Day 18: Full day birding in the Sat Tal district

A full day on the forested slopes of the Sat Tal valley - one of the premier bird-watching destinations in the lower Himalayas, should provide a very satisfying conclusion to our journey. This is a birdwatching paradise! We will start at a specially managed hide and feed station, which is one of several dedicated venues that enable close-up encounters with some of the more elusive species. It also provides outstanding opportunities for photography and detailed observation. Rufous-throated Partridge, Kalij Pheasant, Black Francolin, Red Junglefowl, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Common Green Magpie count amongst the regulars, in addition to a superb array of Woodpeckers, Parakeets, Tits, Bulbuls and Laughingthrushes, that are guaranteed to keep us occupied.

A relaxed afternoon schedule will enable time for any 'unfinished business', a last chance for any special requests or, perhaps, to explore some of the local nature trails.

NIGHT: Rosefinch Sarovar Portico, Bhimtal

February 19 & 20, Days 19 & 20: Return to New Delhi and flights home

The itinerary concludes with a 6–7-hour train journey to New Delhi. Following breakfast, we can reconvene at the nearby Kathgodam Railway Station for our 0840 departure, arriving in New Delhi that afternoon and escorted to our hotel. That evening will be our final farewell dinner. A

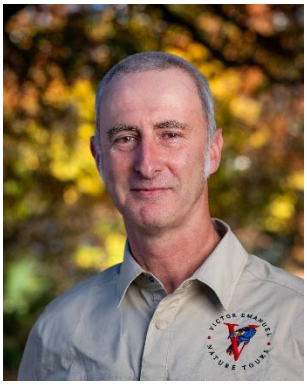
chance to reflect on what promises to be a memorable adventure. Flight departure for home anytime on February 20.

NIGHT: Roseate House, New Delhi

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 10 tour participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space is available.

TOUR LEADER(S): This tour is led by **Scott Baker** and **Barry Lyon**.



Scott Baker's interest in wildlife began early on while growing up in the leafy, outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne which, although a highly urbanized environment, retained significant tracts of remnant natural woodland. It was here at the age of 11 that he got his first pair of binoculars and began what was to become a lifetime quest to identify all the birds in an ever-expanding neighborhood. By the age of 15 he was running weekly bird walks and talks and became a founding member of the very successful Yarran Dheran Junior Field Naturalists Club. In 1988 he was named the Nunawading Young Citizen of the Year in recognition of his contribution to natural history and conservation. Pursuing mutual interests in life science and fine art, Scott went on to hold various roles in business, education, and environmental consultancy. This has facilitated opportunities to explore the wild places and wildlife of Australia and beyond. In 30 plus years he traveled extensively throughout the continent with a major focus on birds. He loves the rare and sometimes challenging, cryptic varieties but also shorebirds and seabirds, having spent many days at sea. To date he has recorded (and photographed) almost all of the regular and resident land birds and pelagic species likely in the country. Scott has a passion for wildlife, not just birds, and conducts studies and regular surveys for mammals, reptiles, and frogs. His fieldwork will often involve additional nocturnal spotlighting sessions, requiring late nights and early mornings to maximize the "tetrapod" options, when possible. Scott is a well-regarded member of the

Australian birding community, a moderator on several birdwatching forums and rare bird committees, and, since 2017, has run birdwatching and nature tours within Australia and parts of southeast Asia. He currently resides in Victoria but frequently interstates or abroad.

Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood in southern California. During his teenage years, he attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which ultimately led to his future involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995 and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of destinations worldwide. He has lived in Austin, Texas since 2004 when he joined our office staff as an administrative assistant. In 2014 he was named Chief Operating Officer (COO), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. In 2023 Barry ascended to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Although Barry still leads two or three trips a year, these days his work is geared almost entirely toward business, customer relations, and the management of the company. Barry's background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He is a former board member and past president of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and outdoor education for children. Barry resides in South Austin with his wife, Brooke Smith.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION:

TOUR FEE: $11,425 per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through dinner on Day 19, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below.

If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **$1,920** will be added to your tour fee.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT website or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **$1,000** per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (October 4, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various

other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, $5 to $10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) $15 to $20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT: If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A "***Force Majeure***" event means any act beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of $50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. **For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour**. This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained through **Medjet** and its

MedjetAssist plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or Medjet, you are required to obtain it through another provider. Please read the remainder of this section for additional information.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive **Ripcord** plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit**.** With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: **Ripcord Travel Insurance;** or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The "pay as you go" approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to "pay as you go," you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a Coronavirus FAQ page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet's MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company's primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: Medjet.com/VentBird or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: $50 domestic; $75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date, with at least two blank pages for India visa stamp, is required for United States citizens to enter India. Please check the expiration date on your passport. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

VISAs: A Tourist Visa is required for entry into India and must be obtained prior to departure. The visa can be obtained online through the Indian government's website (https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/) or Travel Document Systems (https://www.traveldocs.com/ on the web or 888-838-4867 by phone), a company which handles visa procurement. Non-United States citizens should check with your local Indian consulate embassy for instructions.

IMPORTANT: The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of January 19, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

WHAT TO BRING:

CLOTHING: Casual, lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and pants - i.e., hard-wearing, easy-to-wash-and-dry field clothes are recommended for daily wear. Participants should also bring several layers of warm clothing. Keeping in mind February is the northern hemisphere winter period - we suggest packing at least one or two warm sweaters and a jacket or down vest. Other items to consider include a warm head covering (such as a knit or fleece hat or balaclava), in addition to a regular birding hat, along with gloves and a scarf or neck gaiter. BUFF® head and neck wear offers excellent dust protection and helps keep you warm in the cool mornings. Protection from the sun is also essential; therefore, bring a good hat which protects head and neck. Sunglasses are also useful.

SPECIAL NOTE: Please avoid bright colors. Although birds and other wildlife are relatively approachable, we will be trying to see a few less tolerant and elusive species. Muted colors will enhance our chances. Please do not wear brightly colored clothes, hats, gloves, bags or other paraphernalia. Furthermore, if you can avoid crackling nylon/plastic jackets and pants,

this will enhance everyone's enjoyment of the trip and enable the leader to hear those critical but so easily overlooked subtle call-notes of the birds you want to see!

FOOTWEAR: For the most part, comfortable casual sports-style shoes/sneakers will be adequate for bus travel and jeep safaris, but a decent pair of boots may be beneficial in certain areas. There is some walking involved at Bharatpur and the Himalayan component which may include some nature trails and rocky roadsides.

EQUIPMENT: You should bring all the camera equipment, spare flashcards, and batteries that you will need. Flash-cards will be almost impossible to obtain once we depart Bengaluru. **Nearly everyone brings too few batteries and too little flash-card space, and this causes some distress**. **PLEASE bring loads (we cannot emphasize this enough!)**. UV and polarizing filters are recommended, especially at higher elevations where glare can be a problem. Plastic bags are very useful to protect equipment from rain and dust. A good flashlight or headlamp is essential, so please ensure that yours is in good working order and that you have spare bulbs and batteries. A spare flashlight or headlamp is ideal. Couples should bring one flashlight or headlamp each.

A small daypack (either waterproof or with a strong plastic bag inside) is essential for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food, and water. However, in many of the areas where we will be birding, we will have regular access to our vehicle, which will be attended by a driver and his assistant. **Water bottles are important** if you like to carry a regular supply of water.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

Other useful items include:

- **Flashlight or headlamp** (as previously indicated): We will be out at night on a few occasions; a small flashlight or headlamp is sometimes useful at checklist sessions.

- **Handy Wipes:** These are very important, and paper tissues are also especially useful. All participants should carry sufficient amounts for their personal needs for the entire tour.
- **Spare glasses or contact lenses.**
- **Sunscreen**: Strongly recommended, especially for higher elevations where the UV is much greater; lip balm is also essential.
- Umbrella: The collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: At the time of our visit (February), it is the northern hemisphere winter. This is the coolest and driest period, and the most pleasant time to travel in North India. Expect daytime temperatures to range, on average, between 50 - 75°F. Keep in mind that it's much cooler in the mountains. Nighttime temperature for the Himalayan component of this tour (Manila & Bhimtal) can drop below freezing (32°F) and frost or snowfall is even possible. In the mornings at all locations, it can be surprisingly cold riding in the back of open jeeps, especially with wind chill. Morning fog can be an issue (particularly in the Delhi area) but we are unlikely to experience significant rain on this tour.

CONDITIONS: Be aware that access to all the big game reserves (and that includes most of the National Parks) within India is strictly controlled. Foot traffic is not permitted, and all visitors must ride in park service jeeps. Since only 3 - 4 passengers are allowed in a jeep, we may need to operate several vehicles. On some outings you will not be with the VENT leader. The VENT leader and local guides will rotate to the extent possible, allowing him/her to spend an equal amount of time with each participant. Additionally, we try (where practical) to keep the group together. The VENT leader will let the park guides know what birds we may be searching for so they can focus on certain desirable sightings. The birds you will see in the parks are widespread species that you should see during your time in the parks as well as elsewhere during the trip. Therefore, you will almost surely not miss any birds by virtue of being with local park staff during part of the time.

FOOD & WATER: Much to the surprise of many, the food in India is outstanding and not just a plate of hot spices. In fact, on many of our tours, participants have felt that India's cuisine was

one of the highlights of the tour. Excellent breads, tandoor cooked chicken, and a dazzling variety of vegetarian dishes can cater for any palate. Beef is generally not available at all due to religious reasons.

Providing one takes common sense measures such as **NOT** eating uncooked vegetables or unpeeled fruit or drinking unbottled water, participants on VENT trips rarely encounter any serious stomach disorders. Good bottled water is always available.

Snacks - It is advisable to bring granola-type bars, dried fruit or other snacks, as Western-style snacks will not be available and Indian food may not include the roughage and variety we have grown accustomed to in our Western diets.

Sanitation is not ideal; however, it has improved radically during the many years that VENT has been operating tours to the subcontinent, largely as a result of greatly improved hygiene and the widespread availability of bottled, non-carbonated water. Clients are advised **NOT** to drink the water anywhere, even in the very smart hotels of the larger cities. Indian beer is generally excellent and tea and coffee and other bottled soft drinks are safe and widely available. cooked meat or vegetables or food that has been cooling in the open. Only eat fruit that you have peeled, preferably first washing the outside with clean water. **"BOIL IT, PEEL IT OR FORGET IT."**

CURRENCY & SPENDING: Your trip to India includes all necessary expenses; however, you will want to bring enough cash to cover any expenses not included in the program such as gifts, laundry, meals on your own, personal items, gratuities (optional), etc. Major credit cards are accepted at large establishments including hotels, restaurants, and shops, particularly in larger cities. Visa and MasterCard are accepted widely; less so for American Express. Smaller vendors and vendors in smaller communities may accept only cash, so it's recommended that you keep a supply of local currency handy. It is best to carry small denominations of cash as it can be difficult to break larger bills.

The Indian Rupee (INR) is the official currency of India. It is easy to exchange U.S. Dollars for Rupees at airport currency exchanges and at some of the larger hotels where we'll stay. You can also use ATMs if your card is compatible with the machine (many ATMs in India are of an older design). Cirrus is widely used, for example.

You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: http://www.xe.com/

Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

SHOPPING: India has some very fine handicrafts and there will be several opportunities for shopping.

PHOTOGRAPHY: India is one of the most photogenic countries in the world. You could spend a day literally standing in one spot and shooting in all directions. Furthermore, the wildlife is exceptionally tame. Add good lighting and a preponderance of open habitats, and you have a photographer's paradise. However, beware of dust, and bring spares of all those batteries you may need, in addition to lots of digital memory.

ELECTRICITY: India uses 220 volts, 50 cycles, AC. However, electricity can be unreliable. A flashlight or headlamp with a good supply of batteries will be essential. Do not rely on an electric razor or always have electricity available for charging your video batteries (although all participants have managed well enough on previous trips). Please bring all the power adaptors as sometimes you may find two or even three styles in one room!

INTERNET ACCESS: Complimentary Wi-Fi at all lodges.

LANGUAGE: Hindi, English and 14 other languages are spoken.

TIME: 10 to 10½ hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

LAUNDRY SERVICE: All lodges offer laundry services.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult

travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up to date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over the counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Traveler's diarrhea used to be a common complaint on trips to the Indian subcontinent. Fortunately, this is now uncommon. A prescription of Lomotil, to take care of the symptoms, is useful to have along. Malaria is present in some parts of the Indian subcontinent. There are currently three popular prophylaxis treatments for malaria: mefloquine (lariam), malarone, and doxycycline. All of these medications are available by prescription only. Please consult your physician. Recommended vaccinations include cholera, hepatitis, typhoid, and tetanus.

Please be sure to bring along all necessary prescription drugs and other pharmaceutical items. Although they can be purchased in India, you may not be able to obtain your preferred brand.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying "Up to Date" with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when

outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

BITING INSECTS: Remove if not a concern, otherwise expand on it.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone®** (Permethrin): is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.

- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permethrin is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool – Which Insect Repellent is Right for You – to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

suggested Reading & Trip Preparation

Traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend **Amazon** which has a wide selection; **Buteo Books** and **NHBS** which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and **Abe Books** for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

FIELD GUIDES:

BIRDS:

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and T. Inskipp. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Helm Field Guide Series*, 2016.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and T. Inskipp. *Birds of Northern India*

MAMMALS:

Gurung, K.K. and Raj Singh. *Field Guide to the Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent: Where to watch Mammals in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1996.

Menon, V. *A Field Guide to Indian Mammals.* DK Delhi. 2003 (check for more recent editions). **Undoubtedly the very finest field guide to the mammals of India.**

BIRDING RESOURCES AND GENERAL NATURE:

Daniel, J.C. *The Book of Indian Reptile and Amphibians*. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society, 2002.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and T. Inskipp. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Christopher Helm Identification Guide Series*, 2005.

Gay, T., Kehimkar, I.D. & J.C. Punetha. *Common Butterflies of India*. Bombay: WWF India, 1992. OUP.

HISTORY & CULTURE:

Ali, S. *The Fall of the Sparrow.* Bombay. OUP. 1984.

Cubbit, G. & G. Mountfort. *Wild India*. London: New Holland, 1991.

Keay, J. *India: A History*. Grove Press. 2001.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with

a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "***VENT***") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on September 8, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a

tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "***Airline***") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete Terms and Conditions on our website.

Tour Code: INNH:20270201

9/15/25 SB

1/19/2026 PN/