

Bird Watching Tour in Bhutan

Trip code	0
Package name	Bird Watching Tour in Bhutan
Duration	15
Max. elevation	3100 m
Level	MODERATE
Transportation	Private vehicals for all round trip.
Accomodation	3***hotel and Tent twin sharing bed basis during the tour
Starts at	Paro
Ends at	Paro
Trip route	Paro -Thimphu - Punakha - Gasa - Phobjikha - Trongsa - Tingtibi - Bumthang - Sengor - namling - Yongkola - Trashingga - Punakha - Thimphu
Cost	USD 3,550 per person

Highlights

Overview

Bhutan is a paradise for bird watchers and has a rich birdlife owing mainly to its undisturbed habitat. Enjoy huge tract of Himalayan forest, snow-capped mountain ranges and the often approachable and exceptional wildlife, and experience the traditional cultural this country has to offer with visits to monasteries and temples.

Travelling through west to east on a winding trail, you will be thrilled by the astounding beauty of the country side along with bird watching tour where you can observe more than five hundred species of birds. During this tour, you can spot the finest native bird in their magnificent natural habitat. With

trained and experienced local field guides who are themselves keen birders; this tour will be a life time memory for you. The Buddhist principles of living in harmony with nature form the cornerstones of the government's conservation policies, which have declared more than 26 percent of the landmass as protected areas and national parks. The Bhutanese constitution states that more than 60 percent of the country must remain under forest cover for all times to come. As of now 72 percent of the country is under forest cover (including shrubs). Despite the country's size, around 770 species of birds have been recorded in Bhutan and the kingdom is recognized as 221 global endemic birds' areas. Unlike many part of Asia, one is not obliged to seek out a park or reserve or remnant patch of 'good looking' habitat, since at any stop even in the midst of farmland, exciting birds are visible. The mixed broadleaf forests are much richer, and therefore more exciting for birding, than the rather slow growing monotypic stands of blue pine and particularly pine.

Trip Itinerary

Day 1 : Flight to Paro. After arrival, sightseeing tour

Fly over to the dragon kingdom Paro passing by Mountains of 5500 meters to Paro. This flight offers you a mesmerizing aeronautical feat and offers exciting descent into the kingdom. Paro is a beautiful valley and is home to many of Bhutan's oldest monasteries and temples, and the country's only international airport. The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular mountain flights in the world, with a constantly changing panorama of some of the highest mountains on earth including Mount Everest, Mount Kanchenjunga, Mount Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake peak. Paro Airport has been described as "the most difficult commercial airport in the world". 1980 meter runway length presents a double challenge, due to the extremely low density altitude at the site. So, only a handful of well experienced pilots are certified to operate commercial airplanes here thus, making least number of flights in a day. After immigration and custom formalities, check out from the departure lounge. There you will meet one of the representatives of Nature Trail Travels & Tours, Trekking & Expedition who will greet you and then escort you to your respective hotel where you will stay overnight. After lunch, at the hotel there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette and description about the trip by our guide.

Day 2 : Paro bird watching tour

The altitude of Paro valley ranges from 2150 meter to 2950 meter and the ideal birding spots are through the farmlands, broadleaved evergreen forests, the riversides, subalpine forests and shrubberies. Wake up early and walk through the bank of the Paro Chu River and continue on to the Drukgyel Dzong, where you will spot the Ibis Bill, Black Faced Laughing Thrush, Brown Dipper, Spotted Laughing Thrush, the Fired-capped Tit, etc. After breakfast, we will head towards Chele La which is located at an altitude of 3950 meters. The Chele La is a high pass to the west of the Paro valley, where you can spot Kalij Pheasant, Blood Pheasant, Himalayan Monal, Satyr Tragopan and other bird species.

Day 3 : Drive Paro to Thimphu (2,320m/7,424ft) and proceed for bird watching tour – 2 hrs. drive

Drive to the capital of Bhutan, Thimphu following the Pachu River. Once a rustic village sitting in a broad, fertile river valley, Thimphu is today the nation's bustling capital. At evening, explore this beautiful upland valley. Relatively dry, Thimphu valley is surrounded by fine stands of Blue Pine and temperate evergreen forest. The increasing human settlement has pushed birding spots at least 10 km and now the ideal areas for birding are around the stream near Motithang and in and around Begana and Cheri villages. Among several species, few of the bird species recorded here are: Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*), Redrumped Swallow (*Hirunda daurica*), Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus melaschistos*), Grackle or Hill Myna (*Gracula religiosa*), Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla caspica*), Whitebellied Yuhina (*Yuhina xanthoteuca*), Upland Pipit (*Anthus sylvanus*), Plumbeous Redstart (*Rhyacornis fuliginosus*). We will stay overnight at Thimphu.

Day 4 : Drive Thimphu to Wangdue Phodrang via Punakha – 2 hrs. drive

After breakfast, we set out on a scenic drive to Punakha with a stop at Dochu La pass (3,100m), where on a clear day we can get spectacular views of the Himalayas such as the Gangkar Puensum, table mountain, Jeje Khang, Masakhang Gangchey. From the pass, we drive downhill towards Wangdue Phodrang through rhododendron, fir and hemlock forests. The route first passes through a temperate type of leafy forest where rhododendron and magnolia bloom in March and April then moves to semi tropical zone where, orange and banana trees and cactuses are found in abundance. More common species in these valley are: Black chinned Yuhina (*Yuhina nigrimenta*), Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*), Black chinned Babbler (*Stachyris pyrrhops*), Black breasted Sunbird (*Aethopyga saturata*), Red breasted Rose finch (*Carpodacus puniceus*), Fulvous breasted Pied Woodpecker (*Picoides macei*), Large Grey Babbler (*Turdoides melcolmi*), Himalaya Tree Pie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*), Little Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*). Slaty backed Fork tail (*Enicurus schistaceus*), White breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), Yellow billed Blue Magpie (*Cissa flavirostris*), Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Steppe Eagle (*Aquila rapax nipalensis*), Small Niltava (*Muscicapa macgrigoriae*), Himalayan Griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*), Speckled Wood Pigeon (*Columba hodgsonii*), Grey Tit (*Parus major*) and Red crowned Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*).

Day 5 : Drive Wangdue Phodrang to Gangtey – 3 hrs. drive

We drive eastwards through Black Mountain region which is relatively shorter and there are regular stops for birding and photography all along the way. Continuing our drive, the road finally leads to forest of oak and rhododendron and then broad Phobjikha valley which is one of the few glacial valleys in Bhutan. Due to the large flock of black-necked cranes, this valley is one of the most important wildlife reserves in the country. You can view the fascinating Gangtey village on the ridge overlooking the large green expanse of Phobjikha valley. In additions to the species in Wangdue Phodrang, the species readily available in this region are: Amur Falcon (*Falco vesertinus*), Red mantled Rose finch (*Carpodacus rhodochlamys*), Fire breasted Flower pecker (*Dicaeum ignipectus*), Red headed Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula erythrocephala*), Scarlet Finch (*Haemmatospiza sipahi*), White tailed Nuthatch (*Sitta himalayensis*), Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*), Gold crest (*Regulus regulus*), Great Pied Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*), Common Hill Partridge (*Arborophila torqueola*), Snow Pigeon (*Columba leuconota*), Rufous breasted Accenter (*Prunella strophia*), White backed Munia (*Lonchura striata*).

Day 6 : Drive Gangtey to Trongsa (2100 m) – 5 hrs. drive

On the following day, we drive to Trongsa. Trongsa is the gateway to central Bhutan at 2,180 metres. Set amid spectacular scenery, Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family, commands the

eye from miles away. Experience a journey through a warm broad leaved forest passing by the Black Mountains up to Pele La Pass at 3300 meter. This stretch covers a range of habitat from tall, dense, evergreen forest characterized by moss and lichen, covered oak and rhododendron together with broad-leaved trees such as horse-chestnuts, laurels, maples and alders. At higher elevation, the composition changes perceptibly with conifers such as fir, spruce, larch, hemlock and juniper. Bamboo is another important habitat in this region, holding number of special but elusive species. It is not very prominent birding area but still few important species are visible such as: Himalayan Griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*), Himalayan Swiftlet (*Collocalia brevirostris*), Lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*), Snow Partridge (*Lerwa lerwa*), Purple Cochoa (*Cochoa purpurea*), Scaly breasted Wren Babbler (*Pnoepyga albiventer*), Long tailed Minivet (*Pericrocotus ethologus*), Himalayan Monal Pheasant (*Lophophorus impejanus*), Speckled Wood Pigeon (*Columba hodgsonii*) and Rufousbellied Bulbul (*Hypsipetes maclellandi*).

Day 7 : Drive Trongsa to Bumthang (2600 m) – 3 hrs. drive

Drive a distance of 68 kilometers to Bumthang via Yotong La Pass (3400 m) through temperate forests of Trongsa to coniferous and mixed alpine of Bumthang. Apart from being one of the most beautiful valleys of the kingdom, Bumthang is also the religious heartland of the nation. This valley is also known as the ideal birding spots in this region. You can spot few birdslike: Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), Blyth's Pipit (*Anthus godlewskii*), Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*), Little Bunting (*Emberiza fucata*), Red-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) and Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).

Day 8 : Drive Bumthang to Ura (3100 m) – 2 hrs. drive

Start with a visit to Mebar Tsho (Flaming Lake) enroute. Follow the route to Ura, the last and highest valley of Bumthang passing through spectacular views of countryside, forests and large sheep pastures. The road ascends through amazingly open countryside, occasionally running into forests. Ura village has characteristically closed clustered houses which is quite unusual in Bhutan. Enjoy the day by exploring around the fascinating valley and village.

Day 9 : Drive Ura to Sengor – 3 hrs. drive

On the following day, our trail ascends through forest of gigantic firs, often with an understory of rhododendron. The road for a few kilometers is precipitous in the extreme, with steep drops that reveal a landscape defying description, until the pass at Thumshing La Pass (3,750 m) is finally reached. From this highest pass in the country, the road descends to the village of Sengor, a tiny settlement of shingle roofs and lush fields. In the vicinity of Sengor you will see Yello-Billed Magpies, Fire-tail Mizoram and Jungle Fowl. The area is hotspot for one of the endangered species of Satyr Tragopan. This pristine countryside is rich in foliage and forest, making it ideal for Nutcracker Birds, Warblers, Fork-tailed birds and Robin birds. This village is also the home to these mountains most special bird, Monal Lophophorus Impejanus. Other important species visible in this area are: Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*), Blyth's Pipit (*Anthus godlewskii*), Bronzed Drongo (*Dicrurus aeneus*), Gould's Short-wings (*Brachypteryx stellata*), Red-headed Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula erythrocephala*), Speckled Piculet (*Picumnus innominatus*), Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla caspica*), White-throated Munia (*Lonchura malabarica*), White-browed Blue Flycatcher (*Muscicapa leucomelanura*), Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum melanoxanthuon*), Blue-beaded Bee-Eater (*Nyctyornis athertoni*), Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis nipalensis*), Honeyguide (*Indicator xanthonotus*), Red-vented Bulbul (*Pyconotus cafer*), Lesser Racket-Tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus remifer*), Fantail Warbler (*Cisticola exilis*) and Rufous-throated Hill Partridge (*Arborophila rufogularis*).

Day 10 : Drive Sengor to Yongkola – 4 hrs. drive

Travel to Yongkola towards the eastern Bhutan at an altitude of 1855 meter through rich sub-tropical rainforest. Stop at Namling at an altitude of 3000 meter, the Bhutan's most sought-after birding area and many avid bird watchers spend many days here. A full day to explore the Bhutan's best birding in the Namling forests and hope to spot the birds like Ward's Trogon, Satyr Tragopan, Grey chinned Minivet and Chestnut Breasted Partridge amongst a host of other birds.

Day 11 : Drive Yongkola to Trongsa

Leaving Yongkola, we head towards Trongsa today. Upon arrival, you can do sightseeing tour around Ta Dzong or Trongsa Dzong.

Day 12 : Drive Trongsa to Tingtibi, Zhemgang

Today we drive for a distance of 120 km for about 4/5 hours to Tingtibi in Zhemgang. En route we will descend to Yeshe Zam with a hope of catching a glimpse of the Yellow-Rumped Honey and might also catch a glimpse of the beautiful Nuthatch Bird. Continue along the Gonphu road to spot Rufous-necked hornbill, blue throated bee-eater, collared falconet, chestnut-breasted partridge, Timaliids, Wren-babblers, Laughing thrushes, Scimitar-Babblers, Streaked Spider-hunter and Green Magpie. You may also encounter fascinating sight animals like the Golden Langur, Yellow throated marten and Giant Squirrel.

Day 13 : Drive Tingtibi to Punakha

On this day, we will head to Tashithang in the north of Punakha for bird watching tour in the area. Overnight stay in Punakha.

Day 14 : Drive Tashithang to Thimphu

You can also explore the bird watching tour along the Mochhu River to Tashithang, where you will find a number of Waterfowls and some of the species: White-bellied Heron (rare and difficult), Tawny Fish Owl, River Lapwing, Red-headed Trogon, Grey headed Woodpecker, Striated Bulbul, Little Niltava, Pygmy Blue Flycatcher, Pygmy Wren-Babbler, Rufous-chinned laughing Thrush, Red-faced Liocichla, Scarlet Finch, Spotted Wren-Babbler, Ibisbill, Bar-headed Geese, Great-headed Gulls, etc.

Day 15 : Drive Thimphu / Paro Airport – 2 hrs. drive

Early morning drive to Paro airport and for your final departure.

Inclusions

What is included?

Airport pick up & drop by private vehicle as your require.

Private vehicals for round trip.

Standard accommodation twin sharing bed basis for the duration of tour.

All meals fixed breakfast, lunch & dinner with Tea and Coffee for whole duration of your stay in Bhutan.

Mineral water supply for the trip.

Local licensed English speaking Bhutan Tour Guides.

All sightseeing tours, Monument /Museum entrance Fees as per itinerary.

Country Presentation & Tour Briefing on arrival evening.

Bhutan Visa Fees and Visa Processing assistance.

The required number of trekking & touring staff.

All trekking access, route permits logistics & fees.

Government tax which goes to the country's health & education projects.

What isn't included?

Your travel insurance.

Bottled/alcoholic/cold drinks room service.

International airfares and airport departure tax.

Personal Equipment.

Tips to staffs-Tipping is expected.

Any others expenses which are not mentioned on Price Includes section.

Complimentary