

# India

## Bharatpur, Kanha & Pench National Parks

**Saturday 29 January – Thursday 10 February 2011**

Leaders: Richard Coomber and local guides

2011 Cost **£3,499** single room supplement **£420**

**Saturday 28 January – Thursday 09 February 2012**

Leaders: Simon Boyes and local guides

2012 Cost **£3,599** single room supplement **£440**



**T**he wonders of Bharatpur's wetlands and the beauty of the Taj Mahal have been a feature of many of our Indian tours since 1978. Our latest tour combines these elements with some new parks, some new lodges and with the added spice of Tiger sightings. We are heading for Kanha National Park in Central India, where a healthy population of Tigers live in comparative peace in a beautiful mosaic of grasslands, lakes and sal forest. This tour will give us numerous chances to see and photograph these magnificent creatures in daylight. Their prey is abundant: Sambar, Spotted and Swamp Deer. Other mammals here include Gaur, (or Indian Bison), and the more elusive Sloth Bear and Leopard. Nearby is Pench National Park, almost unknown to Western travellers, but good for Tigers and excellent for birds. We visit during the Indian winter, so that temperatures throughout will be comfortable. Transport on the tour will be wonderfully varied: two internal flights, train, jeeps (and elephant-back) in Kanha and Pench; even bicycle-rickshaws in Bharatpur. We have also chosen two lodges, the Bagh outside Bharatpur and the Bagh Forest Lodge outside Kakhna, which should add substantially to your enjoyment of this tour. Join us for wildlife adventures in North and Central India: most fascinating of destinations!



Tiger

### ITINERARY

#### Days 1 to 3

We board a non-stop flight from London to Delhi, where we arrive next morning and transfer to our hotel, where we stay for the next two nights. During our time here we can visit Okhla Bird Sanctuary where, from the west bank of the River Jamuna, we look out onto a bird sanctuary that is usually crowded with wintering duck, such as Garganey, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. We are likely to pick up some interesting species here, such as Bronze-winged Jacana, Pallas's Gull, Rosy Pipit or Citrine Wagtail. Western Marsh Harriers fly over at regular intervals and rearrange the flocks of duck and waders. We shall also make a visit to Humayun's Tomb, which pre-dates the Taj Mahal and was the inspiration for it. Set in mature parkland, this will also be an introduction to birds such as Laughing Dove, Jungle Babbler, Bank Myna and Asian Pied Starling.

#### Days 4 & 5

We leave Delhi this morning by train for Agra, thus avoiding slow and congested main roads. India's railway system is impressive and the carriages are comfortable. On arriving here we shall transfer to the Taj Mahal, one of the wonders of the world. This monument to love was built by the Emperor Shah Jehan in memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. No matter how hardened a birdwatcher you may be, you have to put down your binoculars for a while and gaze in awe at the magnificence of this marble mausoleum. Birds such as Indian Grey Hornbill and Brown-headed Barbet are often seen in the gardens; and Egyptian Vultures perch on the dome. Later, we transfer to Bharatpur where we stay for two nights. Our lovely hotel (the Bagh) is just outside the wetland reserve officially known as Keoladeo Ghana Sanctuary. We will hope that our visit follows a good monsoon, with the lagoons full of water for the thousands of migrant duck that visit the reserve for the winter. We explore the reserve by a combination of foot and bicycle-rickshaw, since no motor vehicles are allowed in the core of the sanctuary. With luck we should see over a hundred species in a day here, with concentrations of waterbirds that can be spectacular. The open water holds Darter, four

egret species, White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Eurasian Spoonbill, Painted and Black-necked Storks, Black-headed Ibis, Spot-billed Duck, Ruddy Shelduck and Bar-headed Goose. Sarus Cranes strut through the flooded fields, and Greater Painted-snipe hide in grassy tussocks. This is a good place for eagle identification, as Eastern Imperial, Great and Indian Spotted and Steppe Eagles all winter here. Bharatpur is a rich habitat even if the monsoon has been poor: Indian Peafowl, Indian Courser, Grey and Large-tailed Nightjars, White-eared Bulbul, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Small Minivet and Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher are just a few of the likely species. The rickshaw-drivers often know where to find owls: Dusky Horned and Collared Scops Owls and Spotted Owlet are the most regularly seen. In some winters, the rare Sociable Lapwing visits the sanctuary.

#### Day 6

After a final morning visit to the sanctuary, we drive to Delhi, where we catch the late afternoon flight to Raipur, where we stay overnight.

#### Days 7 to 9

This morning we drive to Kanha and settle into rooms at the Bagh Forest Lodge, just outside the reserve, where we stay for three nights. The protected area of 750 square miles is a remnant of the extensive forests and grasslands that once clothed Central India. The park was established to protect the rare Barasingha or Swamp Deer; but today its importance stems from being India's premier Tiger reserve. We will search for them by jeep and elephant-back on early morning and late afternoon safaris. Common mammals include Sambar and Spotted Deer (the Tiger's usual prey), Grey Langur, Wild Boar, and the enormous Gaur or Indian Bison. Also present but more

elusive are Leopard, Dhole (Indian Wild Dog), Sloth Bear, and two antelopes: Blackbuck and Chowsingha. There will be time for birding too and we can hope to see Black Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Indian Black Ibis, Shikra, White-eyed Buzzard, Red-headed Vulture, Greater Painted-snipe, Red Junglefowl, Oriental Turtle Dove, Streak-throated Woodpecker and White-rumped Shama.

#### Days 10 & 11

Today we proceed to the deciduous forests and river of Pench, on the borders of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, where we stay in a tented camp for two nights. Here again we can look for Tigers by jeep, within the core area of the park. We also spend time on foot outside the park, taking walks and adding to our bird list. Pench has an excellent range of species, which includes River Lapwing, Painted Francolin, Red Spurfowl, White-naped Woodpecker, Coppersmith Barbet, Pied and Common Hawk Cuckoos, Plum-headed and Alexandrine Parakeets, Crested Treeswift, Jungle Owlet, Blue-winged Leafbird, Black-hooded Oriole, Long-tailed Minivet, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, and Red Avadavat, to mention a few. Among the likely raptors are Oriental Honey Buzzard, Black-winged Kite, Crested Serpent Eagle and Changeable Hawk Eagle.

#### Days 12 & 13

We have a final morning at Pench, where we have a chance to do some birding. In the afternoon, we drive to Nagpur, which is 60 miles to the south, and catch our evening flight to Delhi. Here we have the use of day rooms at a hotel, and have our final dinner, before we move to the airport to catch our direct flight back to London, where we arrive in the afternoon.



Indian Roller

#### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Depart London
<b>Days 2-3</b>	Delhi
<b>Days 4-5</b>	Bharatpur
<b>Day 6</b>	Raipur
<b>Days 7-9</b>	Kanha National Park
<b>Days 10-11</b>	Pench National Park
<b>Day 12</b>	Delhi
<b>Day 13</b>	Arrive London

#### Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients.

#### Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities. The spacious tents at Pench are deluxe safari style on permanent foundations with ensuite facilities, including running hot and cold water, a flush toilet and shower. The tents also have 220v electricity.

#### Transport

By coach and train.

#### Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

#### Excludes

Video and camera fees charged at many parks.


#### Gradings

 Good/Tented

 220


 Cool to Warm

 Low

 Special

 Moderate

 Good

 Moderate

 Scheduled



Indian Peafowl



Taj Mahal