ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

China

Yunnan Extension I

9th to 16th May 2020 (8 days)

Sichuan Birding I

16th May to 3rd June 2020 (19 days)



Golden Pheasant by Glen Valentine

China is a vast land of remarkable diversity. Sichuan Province showcases China's finest and most rewarding birding hotspots and we will explore some of the most pristine and remote regions for the many special breeding residents. Habitats that we shall explore range from moss-draped, broad-leaved and coniferous forests and extensive hillsides covered with bamboo to the vast alpine meadows and scrubby slopes of the Tibetan Plateau. The scenery on this tour is truly spectacular with amazing panoramic views throughout the tour. Pheasants are of particular interest and we will be on the lookout for an astonishing fifteen species! These include White Eared and Blue Eared, Golden, Koklass, Blood and Lady Amherst's Pheasants, Temminck's Tragopan, Chinese Monal, Tibetan and Snow Partridges, Verreaux's Monal-Partridge, Chinese Grouse and Tibetan Snowcock. The supporting cast includes an astonishing ten species of Parrotbill including Great, Three-toed, Spectacled, Ashy-throated, Fulvous and Golden Parrotbills, as well as the rare Pere David's Owl, Wallcreeper, Snow Pigeon, the stately Black-necked Crane, Darjeeling and Black Woodpeckers, range-restricted Emei Shan Liocichla, Pere

David's Tit, the recently described Sichuan Treecreeper, spectacular Firethroat, White-browed and Crested Tit-Warblers, the endemic and monotypic Przevalski's Finch, Przevalski's and Chinese Nuthatches, Sichuan Jay, the stunning Grandala and an amazing selection of laughingthrushes, warblers, snowfinches and rosefinches. Fascinating cultures, dramatic and breath-taking landscapes, plus a bounty of exceptional birds all make for one of the most rewarding birding experiences in all of Asia!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

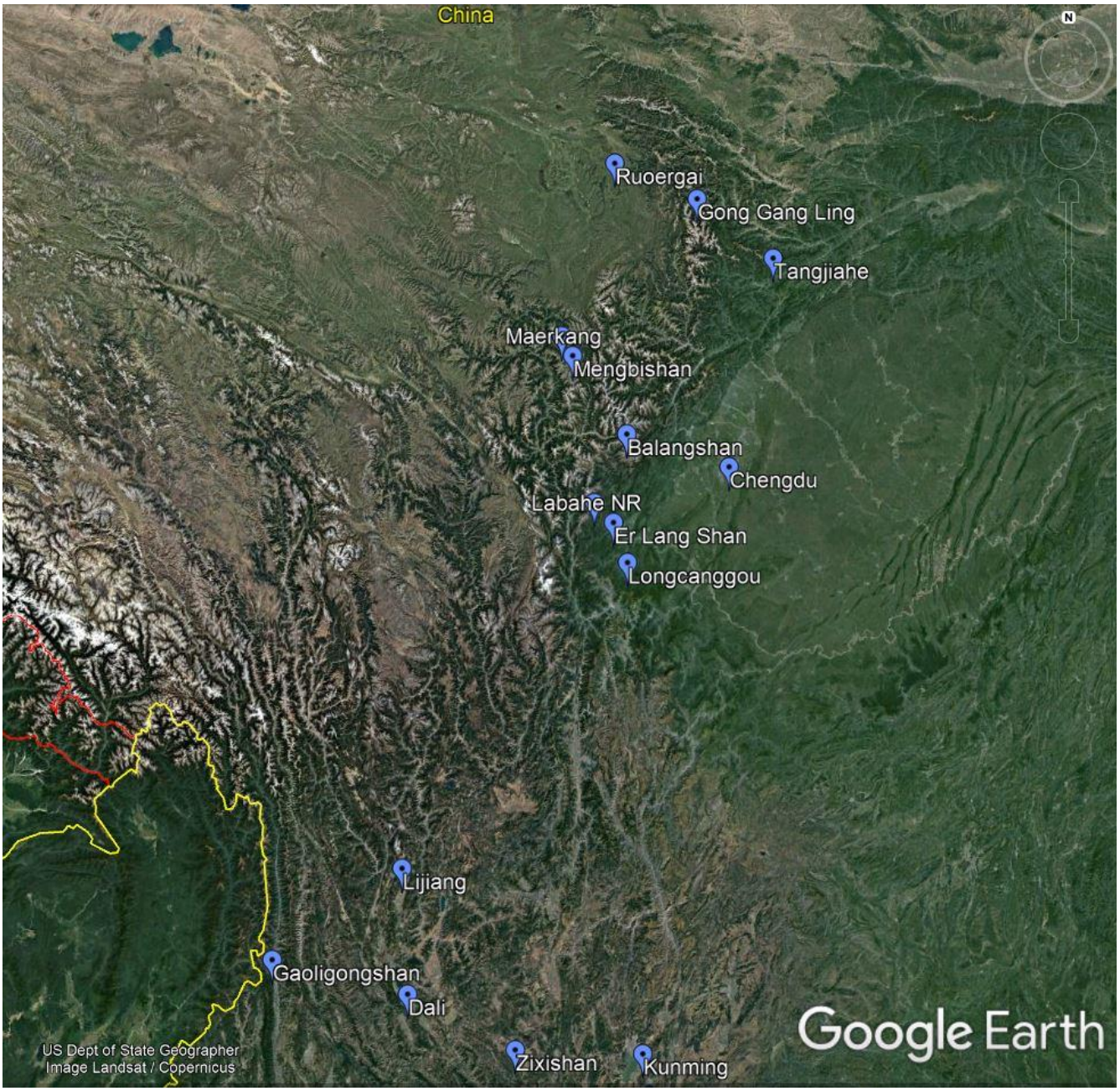
YUNNAN EXTENSION ITINERARY

Day 1	**Chengdu to Kunming and drive to Zixishan Nature Reserve**
Day 2	**Zixishan Nature Reserve and drive to Dali**
Day 3	**Dali to Gaoligongshan via Cangshan**
Days 4 & 5	**Gaoligongshan**
Day 6	**Gaoligongshan to Lijiang**
Day 7	**Lijiang area**
Day 8	**Flight from Lijiang to Chengdu**

SICHUAN MAIN TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Chengdu**
Day 2	**Chengdu to Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve**
Day 3	**Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve**
Day 4	**Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve to Gong Gang Ling**
Day 5	**Gong Gang Ling to Ruoergai, via the Baxi Valley**
Day 6	**Ruoergai, Baxi Valley and Tibetan Plateau**
Day 7	**Ruoergai to Maerkang, across the Tibetan Plateau**
Day 8	**Mengbishan Mountain**
Day 9	**Maerkang to Rilong, via Mengbishan Mountain**
Days 10 & 11	**Balangshan Mountains and Wolong Giant Panda Reserve**
Day 12	**Rilong to Er Lang Shan**
Day 13	**Er Lang Shan**
Day 14	**Er Lang Shan to Labahe National Nature Reserve**
Day 15	**Labahe National Nature Reserve**
Day 16	**Labahe National Nature Reserve to Longcanggou**
Day 17	**Longcanggou National Nature Resereve**
Day 18	**Longcanggou to Chengdu**
Day 19	**Chengdu and depart**

TOUR MAP…


China
Ruoergai
Gong Gang Ling
Tangjiahe
Maerkang
Mengbishan
Balangshan
Chengdu
Labahe NR
Er Lang Shan
Longcanggou
Lijiang
Gaoligongshan
Dali
Zixishan
Kunming
US Dept of State Geographer
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Google Earth

Yunnan Extension



Lady Amherst's Pheasant by Rich Lindie

Located in south-western China, Yunnan Province has recorded over 770 bird species, including several species that are restricted to this tiny area of southern China, neighbouring northern Myanmar and remote north-east India, ranking first in China in terms of total bird species. Yunnan has a varied climate ranging from warm, subtropical forests in the hills and lowlands to cool temperate forests in the higher mountains. Highlights include Lady Amherst's Pheasant, Giant and Yunnan Nuthatches, Red-tailed and Blue-winged Laughingthrushes, superb Scarlet-faced Liocichla, Chinese Babax, Chinese and Black-breasted Thrushes, Rusty-capped, Yellow-throated, Spectacled and Yunnan Fulvetta, Grey-headed and Brown-winged Parrotbills, Black-headed Greenfinch, Black-headed and Beautiful Sibia, Chinese Blue Flycatcher, Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler, Godlewski's Bunting, Black-bibbed Tit, the extremely localised and unique Rufous-tailed Babbler (Moupinia) and with much luck the very rare White-speckled Laughingthrush and Mrs. Hume's Pheasant.



Red-billed Blue Magpie by Rich Lindie

Day 1: Chengdu to Kunming and drive to Zixishan Nature Reserve. This morning we begin the Yunnan Extension with a flight from Chengdu (the capital city of Sichuan) to Kunming in southern Yunnan



White-collared Yuhina by Glen Valentine

province. The provincial capital is Kunming and is known as the "City of Eternal Spring", with a population of 4 million and lying at an elevation of 1,800m (5900ft). From here we will then embark on a three-hour drive through the hilly terrain south-west of Kunming to Zixishan Nature Reserve, arriving in time for some late afternoon birding in the surrounding coniferous and mixed broad-leaved forest. Our well-appointed but rather rustic guest house is perfectly situated in the heart of the nature reserve. Mouth-watering species that we may already encounter this afternoon include Black-headed Greenfinch, Black-headed Sibia, Black-breasted and Chinese Thrushes and Godlewski's Bunting.

Day 2: Zixishan Nature Reserve and drive to Dali. We will spend the entire morning birding along the network of roads and side-tracks in Zixishan Nature Reserve. Our day will begin early with a dawn drive in search of the rare Mrs. Hume's Pheasant that can sometimes be found with a lot of luck feeding at the road edge in the early morning. We will, however, have to be very fortunate to encounter this seldom-seen and declining pheasant. In the large stands of pine trees, we will search for Giant, Yunnan and Chestnut-vented Nuthatches, while Rosy and Long-tailed Minivets, Grey-capped Pygmy and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Black-browed and Black-throated Bushtits, Russet Sparrow, Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Magpie, Ashy-throated Warbler, Brown-breasted Bulbul and Blyth's Shrike-babbler may also be found. We will also explore the small pockets of broad-leaved forest in the wetter gullies for noteworthy species like Rusty-capped, Yunnan and Spectacled Fulvetta, White-tailed Robin, Rufous-capped Babbler, Blue-winged Minla, Vivid Niltava, Chinese Blue and Brown-breasted Flycatchers, Red-billed Leiothrix and Grey-crowned Warbler.

In the late morning, we will depart Zixishan and after a tasty lunch in the town below we shall continue the drive to Dali, a city that is distinctly separated between the "old" and "new" sections of the town. "New" Dali is essentially a modern city, while "old" Dali is a rather quaint and interesting town that has continued to survive as a traditional Yunnanese village with a lot of charm. Our hotel tonight is situated in the heart of old Dali and is well appointed for our late afternoon and early morning visits to the nearby Cangshan Mountain.



Rufous-tailed Babbler (Moupinia) by Glen Valentine

We will check into our hotel upon arrival in the late afternoon and then



Red-billed Leiothrix by Glen Valentine

drive up to the top of Cangshan, an impressive mountain that towers over Dali and also harbours some great birds, most notably the spectacular and much-desired Lady Amherst's Pheasant. The pheasant will be our main target this afternoon but we may also encounter several other eye-catching species that are all possible again tomorrow.

Day 3: Dali to Gaoligongshan via Cangshan. This morning, we will drive to Cangshan and head up to higher elevations in search of the fabulous Lady Amherst's Pheasant, which can sometimes be found along the road edges in the early morning. We will commence our general birding of the mountain after a field breakfast that may well be interrupted by several exciting species such as Collared Grosbeak, Russet, Brown and Aberrant Bush Warblers, the dazzling Mrs. Gould's Sunbird and Black-headed Greenfinch. Other noteworthy species we hope to encounter this morning include the unique and endemic Rufous-tailed Babbler (or Moupinia as it is often called), chattering flocks of White-collared Yuhina, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Bar-throated Minla, Rusty-capped, White-browed, Spectacled and Yunnan Fulvettas, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Black-streaked and Streak-breasted Scimitar Babblers, Japanese White-eye, Yellow-throated Bunting, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Rufous-breasted Accentor, White-bellied Redstart, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker and Bianchi's Warbler. After lunch in old Dali, we will commence our six-hour drive south to Gaoligongshan where we can expect to arrive in the early evening. Gaoligongshan is a long chain of forested mountains that run from north to south along the Burmese border and harbour an array of mouth-watering specialities. We will spend three nights at our perfectly situated and hospitable guest house near the edge of the forest.

Days 4 & 5: Gaoligongshan. We have two full days in this wonderfully bird-rich area and will spend time birding the lush, mid-altitude broad-leaved forest that cloaks the surrounding mountains as well as the secondary forest above our guest house. Both habitats are prolific for birds and we can expect a very enjoyable and exciting time birding along the track that winds its way through this beautiful forest and from several well-appointed and highly productive hides/blinds at the forest edge.



Scarlet-faced Liocichla by Markus Lilje

In the pristine forest higher up we will search for specialities like Beautiful Sibia, Golden-throated Barbet, Grey-bellied Tesia, Yellow-throated Fulvetta, the very rare and secretive Cachar Wedge-billed Babbler, Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, Pygmy Wren-Babbler, Collared Owlet, handsome Yellow-cheeked Tit, richly-colored Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Blyth's Shrike-



Red-tailed Laughingthrush by Rich Lindie

Babbler, Chestnut-tailed, Red-tailed and Blue-winged Minla, Rusty-fronted Barwing and the shy and retiring Rufous-throated and Hill Partridges.

The lower altitude secondary forest supports Wedge-tailed and Pin-tailed Green Pigeons, Speckled Wood Pigeon, Black-breasted Thrush, Blue-throated Barbet, Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler, the splendid Scarlet-faced Liocichla, Blue-winged and the stunning Red-tailed Laughingthrushes, Striated, Brown-breasted, Flavescent and Mountain Bulbuls, eye-catching Crested Finchbill, buzzing Black-throated Bushtits, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, the gaudy Silver-eared Mesia, Yunnan Fulvetta, Grey Treepie, Grey Bush Chat, Hill Prinia, Blue Whistling Thrush, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush and Black-throated Sunbird. We may very well also encounter Crested Goshawk, migrating Chinese Sparrowhawk and the magnificent Black Eagle soaring overhead.

We will also visit at least one of the many hides/blinds that have been set up throughout the lower altitude secondary forest. These perfectly situated hides were essentially set up for photographers but are now frequented just as often by birders as they attract a number of rarely seen specialties such as Rufous-throated and Mountain Bamboo Partridges, Red-tailed and Blue-winged Laughingthrushes, Beautiful and Black-headed Sibia, Scarlet-faced Liocichla and a number of other great birds that show themselves at point blank range, offering amazing views and photographic opportunities of otherwise difficult-to-see species. These hides are now a major feature of any birding visit to Gaoligong and will almost certainly prove to be a serious highlight of the Yunnan Extension.

If we are very fortunate, we may even find one or two of Gaoligong's very rarely seen inhabitants such as Cachar Wedge-billed Babbler, Grey-bellied Wren-Babbler or Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, while an evening excursion to the forest edge could yield Collared Scops Owl.



Golden-throated Barbet by Rich Lindie

Day 6: Gaoligongshan to Lijiang. After some final birding this morning we will embark on the long drive to Lijiang where we will arrive in the late afternoon. We may encounter a few widespread lower altitude species along the drive such as Black-winged Kite, Spotted Dove, Greater Coucal, White-throated Kingfisher, Coppersmith Barbet, Red-rumped Swallow, Asian House and Pale Martins, Sooty-headed and Red-whiskered Bulbuls, Oriental Magpie-Robin,



Black-breasted Thrush by Glen Valentine

Long-tailed Shrike, Pied Bush Chat, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Crested Bunting, Grey-breasted and Striated Prinia, Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Oriental White-eye and Scaly-breasted Munia. We can expect to arrive at our very comfortable accommodation in Lijiang city in the early evening.

Day 7: Lijiang area. Early this morning we will head out in search of Lijiang's prize birds in the forested slopes of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountains, peaking at an incredible 5,000m (16,400ft)! Although the peaks rise up to that altitude, we will be birding between 2000 and 2800m (7000 and 9200ft) for most of the morning. Our aim in particular is to find Lady Amherst's Pheasant, should we not have already seen this species at Cangshan. It is an uncommon but regularly recorded pheasant with sightings more often in the early morning or late afternoon along the roads. Other great birds we will also be looking for include Spotted Nutcracker, the very rare and endangered White-speckled Laughingthrush, Chinese Babax, Grey Crested, Coal, Japanese and Green-backed Tits, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Indian Blue Robin, Grey-crowned, Black-faced and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Black-headed Sibia, Davison's, Alpine and Blyth's Leaf Warblers, Slaty-backed and Rufous-gorgeted Flycatchers, Rufous-tailed Babbler, the scarce Grey-headed Bullfinch and elusive Upland Pipit. Open fields near the roads hold Eurasian Hoopoe, Oriental Skylark, Siberian Stonechat, Grey-backed Shrike and Russet Sparrow.

After a picnic lunch in the field we will we make our way north of Lijiang for our afternoon birding. The drive takes us through some dry, pine-covered hills and agricultural valleys where we can search for Yunnan Nuthatch should we have missed it at Zixishan earlier in the trip. After roughly an hour and a half's driving we will arrive at "The First Bend of the Yangtze River" and the site for our morning's birding. We will focus our attention on an area of mixed bamboo and open broad-leaved forest along the Yangtze River and one of its tributaries where our main target species will be the scarce and range-restricted Brown-winged Parrotbill. Other notable species that we may encounter here include Black-breasted Thrush, Mrs. Gould's Sunbird and Black-headed Greenfinch and if we are very lucky the rare, elusive and nomadic Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker.



Beautiful Sibia by Rich Lindie

Day 8: Flight from Lijiang to Chengdu and final departure. Depending on the time of our



Chinese Grosbeak by Daniel Keith Danckwerts

flight this morning, we may have time to visit a nearby wetland that usually harbours an array of water-birds and interesting, thicket-associated species. Eurasian Wigeon and Ferruginous Duck are usually present and we may also find Oriental Reed Warbler, Dusky and Alpine Leaf Warblers, Taiga Flycatcher and Black-faced Bunting in the surrounding thickets and low trees. The wetland edge provides habitat for migrating Citrine and White Wagtails, Little Ringed Plover, Common Snipe, Wood Sandpiper, Rosy and Blyth's Pipits and Oriental Pratincole. Thereafter we will make our way over to Lijiang Airport to connect with our flight back to Chengdu where the tour will conclude.

Sichuan Birding

Day 1: Arrival in Chengdu. Today is essentially an arrival day but, since we do have some afternoon birding planned in a nearby city park, it would be worth arriving this morning or the day before to ensure that you do not miss out on any birding.

After arriving in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province and eleventh largest city in China, we will meet at our very comfortable and well-situated hotel in the city. In the afternoon we'll commence our birding of this bird-rich city in a nearby city park. Here we will have a relaxing afternoon searching for a few lowland specialities such as Chinese Grosbeak, Collared Finchbill, Vinous-throated and Ashy-throated Parrotbills, David's Fulvetta, and Chinese Blackbird. We will also enjoy a handful of more widespread species like Light-vented and Brown-breasted Bulbuls, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Spotted and Oriental Turtle Doves, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Shrike, Japanese Tit, Red-rumped Swallow, Black-throated Bushtit, Japanese White-eye, and Crested Myna. White-browed Laughingthrushes are pleasantly common and can be especially confiding. If we are very lucky, we may even find a few of the area's rarer species such as Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Amur Paradise Flycatcher, Speckled Piculet and Tiger Shrike. After what should be an exciting and rewarding introduction to our Chinese birding adventure, we will enjoy a delicious welcome dinner and chat about the forth-coming days.



Fire-capped Tit by Daniel Keith Danckwerts

Day 2: Chengdu to Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve. After some further pre-breakfast explorations around one of the nearby green spaces/city parks, we will depart our hotel and begin the drive north towards Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve Forest Reserve. If we still need one or two of the city's



Crested Tit-Warbler by David Hoddinott

lowland species, we will make a late morning stop in at the Chengdu Botanical Gardens where we are likely encounter Black-crowned Night Heron, Little and Eastern Cattle Egrets, Grey and Chinese Pond Herons, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Red-billed Leiothrix and Rufous-capped Babbler in addition to several of the other species we may already have seen. Alternatively, we will visit a small wetland on the outskirts of the city where a variety of waterfowl, Cinnamon Bittern, Pale Martin, and Long-billed Plover may be seen. We will then depart on the fairly long drive towards Tangjiahe.

We can expect to arrive at the entrance to Tangjiahe in the late afternoon and, after checking in, we will drive the final stretch of road alongside a beautiful, meandering, boulder-strewn river that snakes its way through lush broad-leaved evergreen forest that blankets most of the reserve. Our accommodation (1500m (5000ft)), situated in the heart of the park, is extremely comfortable and surrounded by forested hills and mountains and makes for the perfect base for the next two nights.

Day 3: Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve. Situated in the Mingshan Mountains, this 40,000-hectare reserve was established in 1978 to protect a few remaining Giant Pandas. These handsome and endangered mammals still roam freely throughout this area and the number of Pandas within Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve stands at around forty individuals. The reserve also harbours good numbers of Golden Takin and Golden Snub-nosed Monkey. We have an excellent chance of seeing the Takin but we'd be extremely fortunate to encounter the monkey as they generally live at or above the tree-line in the summer months. Asiatic Black Bear and Hog Badger are also both resident but are generally very scarce, and like the Giant Panda, we will have to be extremely lucky to see these enigmatic mammals during our time here. More widespread mammals that we stand a better chance of finding include Eurasian Wild Boar, Reeve's Muntjac, Chinese Goral, Chinese Serow, Milne-Edward's (Tibetan) Macaque, and the endemic Tufted Deer. We will, however, concentrate on the avian treasures, of which there are many, and although the birding can be slow and challenging at times, we should see a good array of fantastic birds during our time in the reserve.



Citrine (Tibetan) Wagtail by Glen Valentine

We will concentrate our time in two main areas: the lower altitude, broad-leaved forest along the two major rivers in the park and a trail that climbs up to the top of one of the



Siberian Rubythroat by Adam Riley

surrounding, low mountains. The fast-flowing, "Himalayan-like" rivers support species like Crested Kingfisher, White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstarts, White-crowned, Little and Slaty-backed Forktails, Brown Dipper, Striated Heron, and the magnificent Tawny Fish Owl. In the surrounding broad-leaved forest we will watch out for Speckled Wood Pigeon, Asian Barred Owlet, Asian Koel, Crimson-breasted, Great Spotted and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, Mountain Bulbul, Rufous-faced, Alstrom's and Sulphur-breasted Warblers, Kloss's Leaf Warbler, Chinese Hwamei, Rufous-capped Babbler, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Spectacled and David's Fulvettas, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Blue Whistling Thrush, Yellow-bellied and Pere-David's Tits, Sooty Bushtit, Mrs. Gould's Sunbird, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Ferruginous, Slaty-backed and Slaty-blue Flycatchers, and Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush.

In the early mornings and late afternoons, we shall drive slowly along the roads and watch carefully for the superb Golden Pheasant that occurs in small numbers in certain parts of the reserve. We will also spend at least one morning along the well-built and maintained trail that climbs up into some higher altitude coniferous and dense bamboo forest habitat. The first hour or two of the morning along this trail is excellent for the spectacular Temminck's Tragopan, as well as Golden and Koklass Pheasants. Other sought-after species we may very well see during the walk include Sichuan Treecreeper, Fire-capped Tit, the immaculate Golden-breasted Fulvetta, localized Spectacled Parrotbill, Baikal Bush Warbler, the rare and incredibly range-restricted Emei Leaf Warbler, White-throated, Barred and Spotted (represented here by the endemic, black-headed subspecies) Laughingthrushes, and bamboo-loving Slaty Bunting.

Day 4: Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve to Gong Gang Ling. We depart Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve this morning, winding our way westwards towards the Tibetan town of Mianyang. Our journey takes us through a low lying (600m – 2000ft), flat, and extremely extensive valley that is blanketed by broad-leaved deciduous forest. Here we stand an incredible chance of seeing Collared Crow, on the off chance that we missed it previously, as well as the more regular Swinhoe's Minivet, Grey-backed and Long-tailed Shrikes, Red-rumped Swallow, Daurian Redstart, Grey Bush Chat, and Chinese Blackbird. As we near Mianyang, we begin to climb rapidly in altitude until we finally cross over the Big Snowy Mountain Pass at just over 4000m



Blue Eared Pheasant by Glen Valentine



Pere David's (Sichuan Wood) Owl by Rich Lindie

(13000ft). The scenery here is, like most of Sichuan, absolutely spectacular and a short photographic opportunity and leg stretch may give us our first views of Bearded and Himalayan Vultures, Alpine and Red-billed Choughs, and the subtly beautiful Rosy Pipit.

After a quick break for a late lunch, we will drive a short way towards the Gong Gang Ling Mountain Pass at around 3500m or 11500ft. We will spend the rest of the afternoon birding along a small trail that heads into a patch of tall, dense coniferous forest. A handful of species, which are generally quite difficult to find at sites we'll visit later on, are usually quite easy here including the sought-after Chinese Grouse, impossibly plumaged Crested Tit-Warbler, Long-tailed Thrush, and Three-banded Rosefinch. We may also encounter our first Blue Eared Pheasants on the pass, as well as Maroon-backed and Rufous-breasted Accentors, White-browed Tit-Warbler, Hodgson's and Bar-tailed Treecreepers, Pzrevalski's Nuthatch, Collared and White-winged Grosbeaks, Grey-headed Bullfinch, Vinaceous Rosefinch, Spotted Nutcracker, Tibetan Serin, Elliott's Laughingthrush, Rufous-vented and Grey Crested Tits, Alpine and Sichuan Leaf Warblers, the entertaining Goldcrest, Kessler's and Chestnut Thrushes, the beautiful Indian Blue Robin, and the powerful Northern Goshawk.

Day 5: Gong Gang Ling to Ruoergai, via the Baxi Valley. This morning will be an early departure as we drive to the top of the Gong Gang Ling Pass where our target species before dawn will be the rare and elusive Pere David's (Sichuan Wood) Owl. We will also have a bit of time in the early morning to search for any species that may have thus far eluded us. After what should be another rewarding morning's birding, we then embark on the three-hour drive to the town of Ruoergai. Our journey takes us over the vast plains of the Tibetan Plateau, where we stand our first reasonable chance of finding the unique Hog Badger, Tibetan Roe Deer, Tibetan and Red Foxes, and the widespread but scarce Grey Wolf.



Pzrevalski's Finch (Pinktail) by Rich Lindie

As we near Ruoergai, we will pay a quick visit to the Baxi Valley to begin our search for a handful of difficult species including the Sichuan Jay, Pzrevalski's and Chinese Nuthatches, Chinese Grouse, and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker. Mammals are also well represented in the Baxi Valley and the rare Chinese Serow will be a key target.

Day 6: Ruoergai, Baxi Valley and Tibetan Plateau. This morning we begin our day's birding in the Baxi Valley. One of our prime



Black-necked Cranes by Dubi Shapiro

target species here will be the superb Blue Eared Pheasant, which we will concentrate on finding in the early morning. The surrounding coniferous forest also supports the rare Sichuan Jay, as well as scarce and sought-after species like Black and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpeckers, Przevalski's and Chinese Nuthatches, Crested Tit-Warbler, and Chinese Grouse. We will also focus our efforts on the densely vegetated gullies where Snowy-cheeked, Plain, Giant and Elliott's Laughingthrushes lurk along with White-throated and Hodgson's Redstarts, Spectacled Parrotbill, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Sichuan Tit, White-browed Tit-Warbler, and Pink-rumped, Himalayan Beautiful and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches. The attractive Kessler's and Chestnut Thrushes are usually present in reasonable numbers and we may also encounter Godlewski's Bunting, Eurasian Wryneck, and Yellow-streaked Warbler.



Chinese Monal by David Hoddinott

We'll listen out for the distinctive songs of the stunning, but usually secretive, Siberian Rubythroat and White-bellied Redstart and, at this time of year, we have an excellent chance of seeing both of these species perched up as they sing to attract their mate and proclaim their territories.

After a delicious traditional lunch back in Ruoergai town, we will venture out in the afternoon to a large, protected wetland reserve known as Flower Lake. The lake and surrounding grasslands and marshy, wetland edge teems with birds, many of which will be on passage north and we will scour the main water-body for new species



Snow Partridge by Glen Valentine

that could include Greylag and the much rarer Bar-headed Geese, Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes, Red-crested and Common Pochards, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, and Eurasian Teal. We may even find a Whooper Swan! The marshy grassland at the wetland edge supports Eurasian Bittern, Brown-cheeked Rail, and breeding plumage Citrine Wagtail (the particularly beautiful black-backed race here is likely to be split as Tibetan Wagtail). Areas of muddy shoreline could additionally yield White-winged, Common and Whiskered Terns, as well as Little Ringed Plover, Temminck's and Red-necked Stints, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper, Whimbrel, and breeding plumage Lesser Sand Plovers. The stately Black-necked Crane also breeds here at this time of year and we should encounter fair numbers throughout the afternoon. If we are especially fortunate, we may even watch a few dancing pairs! Lastly, we will scan the surrounding grasslands for Tibetan Lark, the bizarre Ground Tit, Black Redstart, and Rufous-necked and White-rumped Snowfinches. Hen Harrier and Saker Falcon are also sometimes seen hunting nearby in the late afternoon. Mammal possibilities during the drive back late this afternoon include Grey Wolf, Tibetan and Red Foxes, and Himalayan Marmot, while we are sure to see large numbers of burrowing Plateau (Black-lipped) Pikas.

Day 7: Ruoergai to Maerkang, across the Tibetan Plateau. Today we embark on the long drive across the vast Tibetan Plateau (3500m (11500ft)) towards the town of Maerkang. Leaving in the dark, we will wind our way towards our first scheduled stop for the unique and much desired Przevalski's Finch (Pinktail). We will spend a considerable amount of time here, as its open scrubby habitat is shared with the scarce White-browed Tit, the exquisite White-browed Tit-Warbler, and the tough Tibetan Partridge.

Continuing onwards, we will make regular stops for the Horned Lark, Eurasian and Azure-winged Magpies, Oriental Skylark, Daurian Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Northern Raven, Little Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe, Grey-backed Shrike, Twite, Rock Sparrow, and Siberian Stonechat. A further three rare grassland species that we hope to see include the impressive Saker Falcon, scarce Tibetan Snowfinch, and little-known Chinese Grey Shrike. A few roadside quarries will also be checked for roosting Eurasian Eagle Owl, while mammal possibilities include the unique Hog Badger, Tibetan Roe Deer, Tibetan and Red Foxes, and Grey Wolf.



Maroon-backed Accentor by Glen Valentine

Eventually, as we drop down towards the town of Maerkang in the late afternoon, the

seemingly endless grasslands give way to swathes of dense coniferous and bamboo forests. But birding in these rich habitats will have to wait for the following morning.



Grandala by Glen Valentine

Day 8: Mengbishan Mountain. Today is another early start as we drive up to the top of the nearby Mengbishan. In the early morning we will drive the road up to the top of the pass at 4000m (13000ft) in search of the magnificent Blood and White Eared Pheasants as well as Verreaux's Monal-Partridge. The remainder of the morning will be spent walking slowly downhill in search of the many pine and spruce forest specialities on offer here. Some of the star birds we shall be targeting today are the scarce and elusive Sichuan Jay, the beautiful Crested Tit-Warbler, the huge Black Woodpecker, Three-banded Rosefinch, and the low-density Przevalski's Nuthatch. Long-tailed Thrush usually sings from the tallest pines in the early morning, while mixed flocks often harbour the attractive Goldcrest, Rufous-vented, Coal and Grey Crested Tits, and Hodgson's Treecreeper. The attractive White-throated Redstart is usually fairly common here and we will also be alert for Collared and White-winged Grosbeaks, Spotted Nutcracker, Chinese Fulvetta, Grey-headed Bullfinch, and Red Crossbill. If we are very fortunate, we may also encounter a few of the mountain's rare and seldom-seen species such as Chinese Grouse, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Rufous-bellied and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpeckers, and Chinese Babax.

Day 9: Maerkang to Rilong, via Mengbishan Mountain. This morning we have another early start up the Mengbishan Mountain to search for any species we may not have seen the previous day. Thereafter, we begin the six-hour journey towards the town of Rilong, set on the lower slopes of the impressive Balangshan Mountain. En route, we will stop briefly at sites for both Long-tailed Rosefinch and Hill Pigeon. Our late arrival will mean that the exploration of this exciting destination will have to wait for the next two days. However, our time in the Wolong area will no doubt produce some of the best birds, most memorable sightings, and spectacular scenery of the trip!



Tibetan Partridge by Rich Lindie

Days 10 & 11: Balangshan Mountains and Wolong Giant Panda Reserve. We have two full days to explore the wonderful Wolong Panda Reserve and Balangshan Mountains. Wolong Giant Panda Reserve is world famous as a result of the World-Wide Fund for Nature's research and conservation efforts to save the Giant Panda from extinction. The pioneering work by George Schaller was carried out in this beautiful

region of forested mountains, bamboo thickets, alpine meadows and jagged, snow-covered peaks.



Sichuan Treecreeper by Glen Valentine

We will be up very early on each morning to make the most of the incredible birding that this wonderfully scenic area has to offer and to maximise our chances at seeing the area's amazing selection of pheasants. Our days will begin by driving up and over Balangshan Mountain, at 4500m (14800ft), and into the Wolong Panda Reserve, at an elevation of between 2000 and 3500m (11500ft), where we will begin our quest for the many spectacular pheasant species on offer in these forest-clad mountains! The surrounding pristine coniferous and mixed Rhododendron forests give way to snow-capped peaks and the birding in this beautiful area is absolutely superb. We hope to find the endemic and rare Chinese Monal feeding on the nearby slopes, as well as the lovely White Eared Pheasant. Koklass Pheasant is likely to be heard here at dawn but seeing this shy and secretive species can be rather tricky. Other possibilities in this area include Verreaux's Monal-Partridge, the glowing red Temminck's Tragopan, and Blood Pheasant. The low bushes at the edge of the tree-line often harbour Streaked, Pink-rumped, Common, Dark-breasted and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches, Kessler's Thrush, Blue-fronted and White-throated Redstarts, the immaculate Golden Bush Robin and, with much luck, the rare and range-restricted Sharpe's Rosefinch. Several mammals are also on offer here, including the Hog Badger, Tufted Deer, and Chinese Goral.

Slightly lower down in the taller mixed forest we will search for the handsome and vocal Giant Laughingthrush, Chinese Fulvetta, Fire-capped Tit, White-browed Bush Robin, and Three-banded Rosefinch. Common birds in this area include the Rufous-vented, Sichuan and Grey-crested Tits, White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstarts, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Claudia's, Alpine and Sichuan Leaf Warblers, Rosy Pipit and Chestnut Thrush. Golden Eagle, Bearded and Himalayan Vultures, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, and Common Buzzard are likely to be seen in flight overhead and we will also keep our eyes and ears peeled for rarer species such as the brilliant but secretive Firethroat, Sichuan Treecreeper, Black-browed Bushtit, Scaly and Sichuan (recently split from Plain-backed) Thrushes,



Balangshan Mountain Scenery by Dennis Braddy

Slaty Bunting, Barred Laughingthrush, the nomadic Tibetan Serin, Chestnut-crowned Bush Warbler, and secretive Chinese Wren-Babbler.



Firethroat by Daniel Keith Danckwerts

We will also spend some time around the top of the Balangshan Pass at around 4500m (14800ft) where we shall target several high-altitude specialities, most notably the scarce Tibetan Snowcock, very handsome Snow Partridge, the indescribably brilliant Grandala, Red-fronted Rosefinch (Asia's highest breeding passerine!), Brandt's and Plain Mountain Finches, Alpine Chough, Wallcreeper, Snow Pigeon, and Alpine Accentor. Mammal possibilities on the pass include Blue Sheep (Bharal), Himalayan Marmot, and the endearing Gansu Pika. Scrubby bushes and grassy hillsides nearer the top may also yield a number of exciting species including the beautiful Chinese Rubythroat, Sichuan Tit, the gorgeous White-browed Tit-Warbler, Pink-rumped and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches, Alpine Leaf Warbler, and Kessler's Thrush

Descending lower down towards Wolong town we will search the broad-leaved forest and bamboo undergrowth for lower altitude species that may include the beautiful Yellow-bellied and scarce Pere David's Tits, Sooty Bushtit, and Chinese Leaf Warbler. In the late afternoon, the spectacular Golden Pheasant might put in an appearance if we are very lucky.

Day 12: Rilong to Er Lang Shan. Depending on what we still need, there is some time this morning to bird the Balangshan Mountains again. However, by mid-morning, we will need to depart for the town of Luding where we will spend the next two nights. After a very scenic drive, we will arrive in the area in the late afternoon and, if there is still time, we will commence our birding along the old, unused Er Lang Shan Pass road. In the evening we will settle into our accommodation, in the picturesque town of Rilong.



Yellow-bellied Tit by Glen Valentine

Day 13: Er Lang Shan. Er Lang Shan has recently become an extremely good and reliable site to see a number of Sichuan's rare and sought-after species such as Lady Amherst's Pheasant and the brilliant Firethroat. A further four rare and range-restricted Chinese specialties also occur here and will be targets during our day on the mountain and these are the endemic and strange Rufous-tailed Babbler (Moupinia), the shy and secretive Barred Laughingthrush, the striking Streaked Barwing, and Sharpe's Rosefinch. While birding along the now-abandoned road that meanders down Er Lang Shan, we also hope to find a range of more widespread but no less exciting and desirable

species such as Green Shrike Babbler, White-browed and Grey-hooded Fulvettas, Slaty Blue Flycatcher, Black-browed Bushtit, Mrs Gould's Sunbird, Brown and Great Parrotbills, Dark-rumped Rosefinch, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Yellow-bellied, Fire-capped and Grey Crested Tits, Stripe-throated Yuhina, and Chestnut-flanked White-eye.



Golden Parrotbill by Dubi Shapiro

Day 14: Er Lang Shan to Labahe. This morning we will depart the area and begin the drive east towards the incredible Labahe National Nature Reserve. Labahe is located about four-hours' drive to the north of Er Lang Shan and forms an extension of the Hengduan range, offering access to some of China's most desirable mammal and bird species. Following an extended closure, during which the reserve's infrastructure was significantly improved to support an ever-increasing number of visiting Chinese tourists, Labahe reopened in 2016 and has since become one of Sichuan's premier birding destinations. We ought to arrive in our comfortable hotel in time for a late lunch, after which we'll begin our exploration of this incredible reserve

Day 15: Labahe National Nature Reserve. Our full day in this rugged, yet extremely scenic, reserve will certainly be one of the highlights of this tour. We will be birding along the reserve's extensive road and trail networks, distributed between 1400m (4600ft) and 2750m (8000ft), where we stand an excellent chance of finding several rare and little-known species.



White-backed Woodpecker by Glen Valentine

Most of our time will be spent birding above 2000m (7000m) where we hope to find Three-toed, Fulvous, Brown, and Great Parrotbills, the inexplicitly scarce Streaked Barwing, Spotted and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, Golden and White-browed Bush Robins, Hodgson's, Bar-tailed and Sichuan Treecreepers, Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, Darjeeling and Crimson-breasted Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied, Aberrant, Spotted, Chestnut-crowned and Brown Bush Warblers, Bianchi's Warbler, Golden-breasted and Grey-hooded Fulvettas, and White-bellied Redstart. We also stand an incredible chance of encountering several more Lady Amherst's Pheasants in these higher-altitude areas!

Lower down, we hope to see Lesser Coucal, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Yellow-browed and Coal Tits, Collared Finchbill, Black-browed Bushtit, David's Fulvetta, Chinese Thrush, Taiga Flycatcher, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Slaty Bunting, and at least five species of Redstart. Golden-

fronted Fulvetta has also been reported from here, though this species is much easier to see at Longcanggou.



Grey-hooded Parrotbill by David Hoddinott

In addition to the incredible birdwatching opportunities, we stand an excellent chance at adding several highly sought-after mammal species. First and foremost, Labahe's lush mid-elevation forests have been described as one of the best areas in the world to see the gorgeous, yet rare and elusive, Red Panda. Most of our time will be spent in its favoured high-altitude bamboo habitat, so we certainly have a decent chance of finding at least one of these mythical creatures during our two-day stay. Chinese Serow, Red-and-White Giant Flying-Squirrels, Sambar Deer, Hog Badger, Chinese Leopard Cat, and Golden Takin are just some of the other mouth-watering mammals that are on offer, though we admittedly require an immense amount of luck to actually see some of these absolute megas.

Day 16: Labahe to Longcanggou. We will have one final opportunity to visit Labahe's lower elevation forests, to search for the last remaining targets that we may still need. After a final lunch at our hotel, we will then depart for Longcanggou National Nature Reserve. We will arrive, at our comfortable entirely-wooden hotel set just on the outskirts of the reserve, in time for a late afternoon stroll where we may encounter Red-billed Blue Magpie, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Forest Wagtail, Long-tailed and Grey-backed Shrikes, Common Pheasant, and (if we are very lucky) Chinese Bamboo Partridge. Thereafter, we will settle in for a delicious dinner and an early evening.

Day 17: Longcanggou National Nature Reserce. We have a full day to explore this incredible reserve, where our efforts will be centred on the taller bamboo and mixed broad-leaved forest that remain open to us following the recent reintroduction of Giant Pandas into the higher sections of the reserve. Here we hope to find the scarce and unobtrusive Emei Shan Liocichla, handsome but shy Red-winged Laughingthrush, the rare Emei Leaf and White-spectacled Warblers, recently described Sichuan Bush Warbler, secretive Buffy Laughingthrush, tricky Chinese Blue Flycatcher, and the shy Slaty Bunting. We also stand our best chance of finding the inexplicitly rare Golden-fronted Fulvetta in this habitat. Helpful and more common distractions while we search for these tricky species will include the striking Ashy-throated Parrotbill, Brown Bullfinch, Red-billed Leiothrix, Yellow-browed, Fire-capped,



Himalayan Bluetail by Glen Valentine

Coal, and Green-backed Tits, Martens's, Grey-crowned and Alstrom's Warblers, Elliott's Laughingthrush, Fujian Niltava, Himalayan and Large Hawk-Cuckoos, Short-billed and Long-tailed Minivets, Bay and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Great Barbet, impressive Red-billed Blue Magpie, Green and Blyth's Shrike-Babblers, Hair-crested Drongo, and the difficult to see Pygmy Wren-Babbler.



Temminck's Tragopan by David Hoddinott

We will then embark on an evening drive for pheasants, which may be feeding along the roadside. Here we stand a reasonable chance of seeing both Temminck's Tragopan (the males a brilliant, glowing red) and Lady Amherst's Pheasant. En route back to the hotel, we may also have a chance to stop for the rare and range-restricted Himalayan Owl.

Day 18: Longcanggou National Nature Reserve to Chengdu. All of this morning will again be spent in Longcanggou National Nature Reserve, tracking down any of the key targets that we may still need. Thereafter, we will depart on the fairly long drive back to Chengdu. Our evening will be spent at an excellent local restaurant nearby where we will enjoy a delicious farewell dinner while reminiscing over the amazing sightings and experiences that we will no doubt have been treated to over the past few weeks

Day 19: Chengdu and depart. Our tour of this enchanting and little-explored region will conclude after breakfast at our hotel in Chengdu.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 8 of the Yunnan extension and from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 19 of the main tour; and;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including local guides and tour leaders).

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY flights (International and domestic);**
- Visa fees;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities;

- Telephone calls; and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:
a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. Therefore, if you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes

- This China tour is designed to be a comprehensive birding experience and we will attempt to get good views of as many bird species as possible. Most of the tour is not physically challenging but please note there is one fairly arduous trail to look for Temminck's Tragopan at Tangjiahe. Our pace will however always be slow.
- In some areas it can get very cold, especially if we encounter high winds. Some of the birds are low in density and we should expect some full days birding without mid-day breaks in order to find the maximum variety of species.
- This tour does require a good level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Furthermore, we will be well away from modern medical facilities for most of this tour – if you have any medical or physical limitations, please let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.
- Accommodations vary greatly in China, from excellent in the main centres to fairly basic in the more remote areas. Accommodations throughout this tour, are however, generally of a very good standard both in Yunnan but especially in Sichuan.
- Because of the regular change of accommodation, the more luggage you pack the less mobile you are, so it is important for your comfort and ease of travel that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.

- Biting insects are present but generally not problematic during this tour; however, some people prefer insect repellent and guests should also be aware in advance if they are allergic to bees. Carrying the necessary medication in this regard is essential; please contact the Rockjumper office and we will advise you further.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The Yunnan Extension will depart from Chengdu on the morning of day 1 with a flight to Kunming. It is best to arrive the day before the tour start date in case of any flight delays. The tour will conclude in Chengdu after a flight from Lijiang in the morning after breakfast of day 8.

The main tour will begin at our hotel in Chengdu on day 1. The first day of the tour is essentially an arrival day but if you would like to arrive earlier you are welcome to as this will then give you extra time to rest and catch up on jetlag before commencing the tour. The tour will conclude in Chengdu after breakfast on day 19.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport, Chengdu (IATA: CTU) is the main port of entry for international flights for this tour and is well serviced by several major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**