China

Highlights



Blue-crowned Laughingthrush by Stephan Lorenz

Our China – Highlights & Qinghai Extension tour targets some of Asia's rarest species, drawing the attention of even those with already impressive Asia and world lists. Seldom visited by western birders, we shall embark on an action-packed adventure covering the major sites of southeast China, Sichuan, and Qinghai.

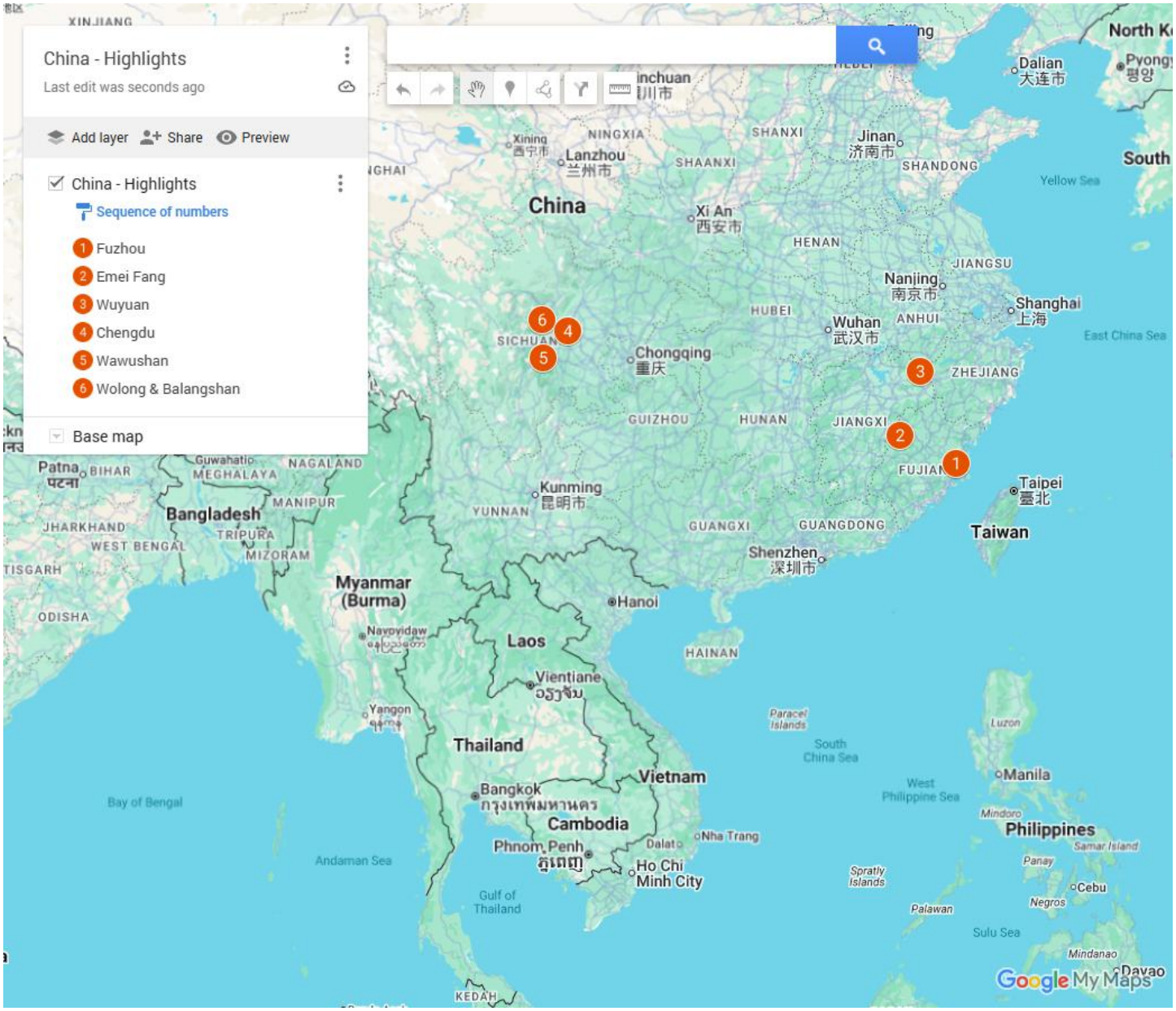
We hit the ground running searching for the skulky White-necklaced Partridge in Fuzhou before moving northeast to Emei Feng, to find one of the world's rarest pheasants, Cabot's Tragopan, as well as Elliott's Pheasant and Spotted Elachura, now placed in its own family. Moving further north, we make a stop in Wuyuan for Pied Falconet and the recently discovered Blue-crowned (Courtois's) Laughingthrush, of which perhaps 200 individuals still exist.

We then head to Sichuan Province, showcasing some of China's finest and most rewarding birding hotspots in the most pristine and remote regions. The scenery on this section of the tour is truly spectacular with amazing panoramic views of forest-clad mountains and snow-capped peaks. Pheasants are of particular interest, and we will be on the lookout for White Eared, Golden, Koklass, Blood and Lady Amherst's Pheasants, Temminck's Tragopan, Chinese Monal and Snow Partridge, Verreaux's Monal-Partridge and Tibetan Snowcock.

The supporting cast includes an astonishing nine species of Parrotbill that includes Short-tailed, Ashy-throated, Golden, Fulvous, Grey-hooded, Great, Brown and Three-toed Parrotbills, as well as Wallcreeper, Snow Pigeon, Darjeeling Woodpecker, range-restricted Emei Shan Liocichla, Pere David's Tit, the recently described Sichuan Treecreeper, spectacular Firethroat, White-browed and Crested Tit-Warblers, the stunning Grandala and an amazing selection of laughingthrushes, fulvettas, warblers and rosefinches.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Fuzhou**
Day 2	**Minjiang Estuary & Fuzhou Forest Park**
Day 3	**Fuzhou to Emei Feng**
Days 4 & 5	**Emei Feng area**
Day 6	**Emei Feng to Wuyuan**
Day 7	**Wuyuan area**
Day 8	**Wuyuan, flight to Chengdu**
Day 9	**Chengdu to Wawushan**
Days 10 & 11	**Wawushan**
Day 12	**Wawushan to Wolong**
Days 13 & 14	**Wolong & Balangshan area**
Day 14	**Chengdu & final departure**


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Sequence of numbers
1 Fuzhou
2 Emei Fang
3 Wuyuan
4 Chengdu
5 Wawushan
6 Wolong & Balangshan
Base map
China
Myanmar (Burma)
Laos
Thailand
Vietnam
Cambodia
Bangladesh
Taiwan
Philippines
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Birding sites in detail



Collared Finchbill by Clayton Burne

Minjiang Estuary. The estuary will, of course be the focus of our attention for at least a few hours. The estuary provides us the possibility of encountering Chinese Crested Tern which is present here in spring only. These very rare birds were, until recently thought to be extinct. Our chances are minimal, and we would enter the ranks of a very small number of birders to have seen these elegant birds, should a lot of luck be on our side.

Fuzhou Forest Park. Not only does this park contain a network of well-maintained trails to service such visits, but the variety of habitats also contained within its boundaries house a host of widespread and localized species - foremost among the latter being White-necklaced Partridge. These birds are not uncommon in heavily wooded parts of the park, as is often evident from their vocalizations, though we will likely need to invest a lot of time to catch a glimpse of one. Along the way we can expect regular distractions from several other desirable species, including Pale-headed Woodpecker, Chestnut Bulbul, Fork-tailed Sunbird, Great Barbet, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler, Ashy Minivet, Collared Finchbill, Indochinese Yuhina, Brown-headed Thrush and Daurian Starling. On top of this, the list of potential migrants we may bump into includes a bounty of leaf-warblers, thrushes, buntings and even a robin or two!

Emei Feng. Emei Feng is understandably one of the premier birding spots in the south-east corner of China. Not only do the area's heavily wooded slopes harbour such sought-after endemics as Elliot's Pheasant and the star bird of the region, Cabot's Tragopan, they hold healthy populations of two other spectacular 'chickens' - Silver and Koklass Pheasants. A passerine platter includes Yellow-bellied Tit, Fujian, and David's Fulvetta, Chinese Hwamei, Buffy, Moustached and Masked Laughingthrushes, Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher and Spotted Elachura.



Grandala by Glen Valentine

The latter now in a monotypic family and another big drawcard to the region for family collectors, whilst warbler enthusiasts are drawn to the area for the chance to boost their lists with a host of *Phylloscopus* warblers including Buff-throated, Hartert's Leaf, Kloss's Leaf, Sulphur-breasted, Bianchi's, Rufous-faced and Alstrom's Warblers! To catch sight of as many of these species as possible, we will bird the upper reaches of the mountain range as well as lower elevations, often covering the best stretches of road for

pheasants in our vehicles, to give us the best chance of spotting these often-shy beasts.



Mandarin Ducks by Clayton Burne

Wuyuan. Wuyuan and the hills to its immediate south-west comprise almost the entire global range of the recently discovered Blue-crowned Laughingthrush, making this otherwise out-of-the-way town a must-visit destination for birders. Fortunately, the area also holds several other birds of significant interest, including Mandarin Duck, Masked and Moustached Laughingthrushes, Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler, Pied Falconet, Swine's Minivet, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Chinese Grosbeak, Brown Crake, Long-billed Plover, Short-tailed and Grey-headed Parrotbills, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher and Red-billed Starling. We have therefore dedicated at least a full day to explore the region around town, taking in a variety of habitats from agricultural areas to well-wooded slopes, quiet streams and even a restaurant rooftop!

Chengdu. 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, while enjoying 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 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.

Wawushan Nature Reserve. This rugged, yet extremely scenic reserve will certainly be one of the highlights of this tour. Paired with Emei Shan to the East, Wawushan is a towering, isolated peak with well-developed tourism infrastructure including a cable car that permits access to a massive altitudinal area and a range of habitats between 600m (1 968ft) near the base to over 3 000m (9 842ft) at the summer. Here, we stand an excellent chance of finding several rare and little-known species.



Golden Pheasant by Glen Valentine

Most of our time will be spent birding above 2 000m (7 000ft) where we hope to locate the inexplicitly scarce Streaked Barwing, Spotted and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, Golden and White-browed Bush Robins,



Fire-capped Tit by Daniel Danckwerts

Hodgson's, Bar-tailed and Sichuan Treecreepers (this being the type locality for the latter species), 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. Incredibly, eight species of parrotbill are possible here including the scarce Fulvous, Golden, Three-toed, Great, Brown, Grey-headed and Gray-hooded Parrotbills. We also stand an excellent chance of encountering several more Lady Amherst's Pheasants in these higher-altitude areas, as well as a reasonable chance of seeing Temminck's Tragopan (the males a brilliant, glowing red).

Lower down, we will be searching for 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 rare Golden-fronted Fulvetta in this habitat. We can expect to find several commoner distractions while we search for these tricky species such as the striking Brown Bullfinch, Red-billed Leiothrix, Yellow-browed, Fire-capped, 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.

In addition to the incredible birdwatching opportunities, we stand an excellent chance at adding several highly sought-after mammal species. First and foremost, Wawushan has 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 stay. Other highlights may include 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 see some of these mega species.



Chinese Bamboo Partridge by David Hoddinott



Firethroat by Daniel Danckwerts

Balangshan Mountains & Wolong Giant Panda Reserve. We have several days to explore the wonderful Wolong Panda Reserve and Balangshan Mountains. Wolong Giant Panda Reserve is world famous because 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.

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 4 500m (14 800ft), and into the Wolong Panda Reserve, at an elevation of between 2 000 and 3 500m (11 500ft), 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 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 treeline 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)



Chinese Monal by David Hoddinott



Snow Partridge by Glen Valentine

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

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 several 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. *This pass forms part of the core area of the Giant Panda National Park and is prone to being closed by wildlife officials at short notice and for indefinite periods of time. If access is not possible, then we will spend more time at mid and lower elevations.*

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 appear if we are very lucky.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate to brisk paced tour suited for those in good health with a good level of fitness. Not suited for dedicated photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges. Many early mornings & long days.
Birding Ease		Moderate. Several rare/difficult species, many low-density species require repeat searches.
Accommodation		Comfortable for the most part, some more basic with non-western WC facilities.
Walking / Trails		Fair amount of walking, mostly on roads and tracks.
Vehicles / Roads		Mostly good quality roads in a comfortable vehicle. Several long drives.
Photography		Good to very good, some purpose-built hides & blinds.
Annoyances		Several very early mornings, cold to very cold weather at times. Some high-altitude sites >3 000masl

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 15
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, 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.

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

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Highlights Tours offer a full birding experience in a shorter timeframe, focusing on the destination's key birding sites and species. They retain the pace and intensity of our Classic tours, including early starts, long field days and night birding where necessary. They are not designed to be easier, slower or more relaxed. Rather than attempting comprehensive coverage, we concentrate on the most important sites and a strong selection of priority species. They are ideal for birders seeking a rewarding, focused birding experience with limited time available.

- In some areas it can get very cold, especially if we encounter high winds. Some of the area's most special birds occur at low densities and we should expect some full days birding without mid-day breaks to find the maximum number and 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.

- We will be well away from modern medical facilities for most of this tour.
- Accommodations vary greatly in China, from excellent in the main centres such as Chengdu, Xining, Beijing & Shanghai to very basic in the more remote areas. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance problems that are beyond our control. Please note that some accommodations during the tour have basic shared washroom facilities, no hot water, and primitive toilet systems.
- 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.
- As a good amount of time in Sichuan will be spent around 3 000m (+-10 000ft), it is of paramount importance that anyone with heart or respiratory ailments seeks medical advice before deciding to participate on this tour. If you are prone to altitude sickness, then please be aware that much of this tour will not be suitable.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins with an arrival day in Fuzhou, and you are welcome to arrive at any time before 17:00. The tour will conclude in Chengdu after breakfast on day 15.

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.

Fuzhou Changle International Airport, Fuzhou (IATA: FOC) is the main port of entry, whilst Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport, Chengdu (IATA: CTU) is the main port of departure for those only doing the main Highlights Tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.