China

Southeast in Spring

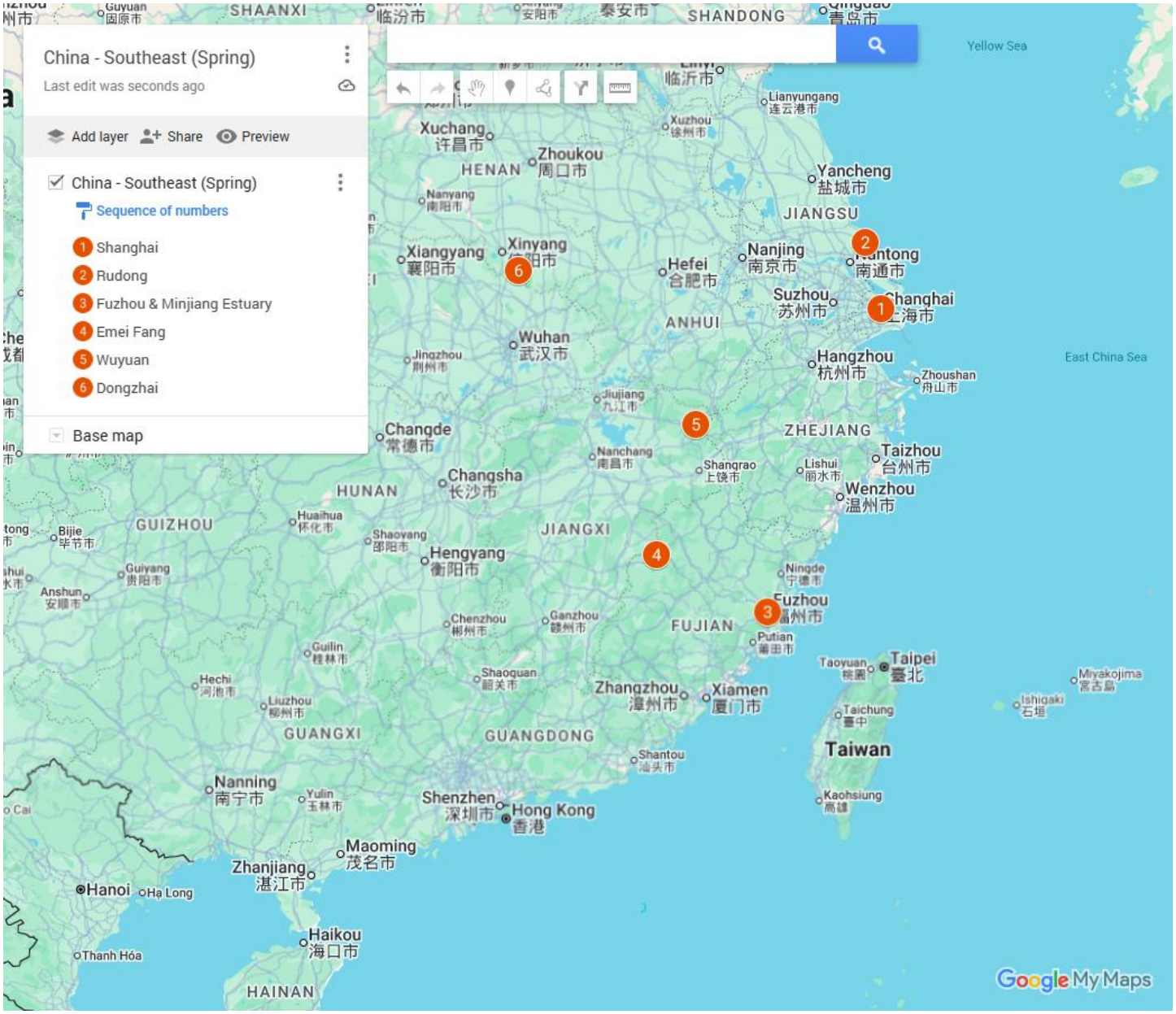


Cabot's Tragopan by Adam Riley

Our southeast China in Spring tour targets some 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 beginning at north of Shanghai searching for the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper, which fattens up on the mud flats near Rudong before making its final flight to breed in Russia. We then fly south to Minjiang Estuary, Fuzhou for the very skulky White-necklaced Partridge in Fuzhou itself. We move northeast to Emei Feng, to find one of the world's rarest pheasants, Cabot's Tragopan and the scarce Spotted Elachura, now placed in its own family. We also target Elliott's Pheasant and Blyth's Kingfisher before moving onwards to Wuyuan for the recently discovered Blue-crowned (Courtois's) Laughingthrush, of which perhaps 200 individuals still exist. Aside from the big draw card species, we shall collect a host of migrant passerines and other sought after species including Nordmann's Greenshank, Saunders's Gull, Fujian Fulvetta, Hartert's Warbler, Siberian Blue Robin, Red-flanked Bluetail, Siberian Thrush, Pallas's Reed Bunting and a bevy of Phylloscopus warblers. We complete our tour in the country of Henan Province, traversing Dongzhai Nature Reserve, Ling Shan Mountain and the marshes surrounding Xinyang searching for Reeves's Pheasant and Crested Ibis – both Critically Endangered species.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Shanghai**
Day 2	**Shanghai to Rudong**
Days 3 & 4	**Rudong & surrounds**
Day 5	**Rudong to Shanghai; flight to Fuzhou**
Days 6 & 7	**Minjiang Estuary & Fuzhou Forest Park**
Day 8	**Fuzhou to Emei Feng**
Days 9 & 10	**Emei Feng area**
Day 11	**Emei Feng to Wuyuan**
Days 12 & 13	**Wuyuan area**
Day 14	**Wuyuan to Dongzhai**
Day 15	**Dongzhai area**
Day 16	**Dongzhai area; flight to Shanghai**
Day 17	**Final departure**


China - Southeast (Spring)
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China - Southeast (Spring)
Sequence of numbers
1 Shanghai
2 Rudong
3 Fuzhou & Minjiang Estuary
4 Emei Fang
5 Wuyuan
6 Dongzhai
Base map
Yellow Sea
East China Sea
SHAANXI
SHANDONG
HENAN
JIANGSU
ANHUI
ZHEJIANG
HUNAN
GUIZHOU
JIANGXI
FUJIAN
GUANGXI
GUANGDONG
HAINAN
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Hong Kong
Hanoi
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Birding sites in detail



Spoon-billed Sandpiper by Rob Williams

Shanghai to Rudong area. Much of the coastline and interior north of Shanghai is littered with mudflats, wooded plots and agricultural fields that temporarily host migrants on their journey between Southeast Asia and Australasia, as well as some very interesting resident species.

Taking our time to traverse the distance between Shanghai and Rudong, we will scour some of these hotspots for a wide range of potential new species for the trip. Chief among these will be Marsh Grassbird and Reed Parrotbill, whilst migrants like Ashy Minivet, Narcissus Flycatcher, Yellow-rumped, Mugimaki and Green-backed Flycatcher, Chinese Grosbeak, Chestnut Bunting, Pale-legged Leaf and Eastern Crowned Warbler, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian and Pale Thrush, Siberian Blue and Rufous-tailed Robin, Amur Falcon, Pechora Pipit and perhaps a Northern Boobook.

Rudong & surrounds. We will no doubt have encountered several shorebird species during our drive to reach Rudong, but our time in the area will hopefully add the most prized species found along the entire eastern seaboard of China. Spoon-billed Sandpiper is of course found at several other sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, but none are as reliable as the coastal flats near Rudong. We therefore stand an excellent chance of seeing this Critically Endangered species. We also have enough time to search for other specials that stage in the area in preparation for their migration further south. Included in this list are Saunders's Gull, Black-faced Spoonbill, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Far Eastern Curlew and Grey-tailed Tattler - all of which are possible in just one day!

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.



Black-faced Spoonbill by Clayton Burne

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



Yellow-bellied Tit by Glen Valentine

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.

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.



Spotted Elachura by Glen Valentine

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



Blue-crowned Laughingthrush by Stephan Lorenz

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!

Dongzhai area. From our guesthouse, we shall set out on foot towards Dongzhai searching the rice paddies and surrounding trees for the first of our prime targets, Crested Ibis. Once a widespread species that inhabited Japan, China, Korea and Russia, the species was thought to be extinct in the wild by the late 1970's. Extensive research lasting more than three years managed to find a tiny population of just 7 individuals in Shaanxi Province. China enacted emergency regulations to protect the species, declaring all nesting trees as state property, forbidding logging and the use of agrochemicals in nearby rice paddies. While initial attempts at captive breeding failed in Japan, further attempts in China proved very successful. Having more than flirted with extinction, the Crested Ibis has mounted a strong recovery with successful re-introductions in Japan and China.

The population around Dongzhai has adapted very well to living side by side with humans, nesting and raising chicks in villages close to houses. With a little luck, we'll find one of several local pairs that allow for extraordinarily good views from only a few metres away! This area is also a good location for the much sought after Collared Crow, and we have an excellent chance of finding one of these pied corvids perches in nearby trees or on telephone poles.



Collared Crow by David Hoddinott

Dongzhai Nature Reserve. Depending on local advice, we may opt to sit in a specially created blind and wait for our pheasant quarry to come to us, or we shall make an initial investigation of the core forest area and try to find a male Reeves's Pheasant near the paths. It should be noted that the birds



Reeves's Pheasant by Clayton Burne

rarely visit the blind area during Spring, spending much of their time vocalising and displaying to females from exposed rocks on the surrounding rock and vegetation strewn slopes.

Not only does the male sport an incredible scaled golden, white, black and red plumage, it is the tail - the monumentally long, barred tail that really stands out! The current holder of the world record for the longest natural tail feather (2.40m), it is without doubt one of the world's mind-blowing birding experiences.

Depending on recent sighting information, we may head straight to the core zone of Dongzhai Nature Reserve, or head to the nearby Ling Shan Park. Either way, our tour is timed to coincide with the peak breeding season, when males vigorously call and display making them somewhat easier to locate. Fortunately, it is not uncommon to find a covey of females and young males standing in awe of a large male in full display right next to the road.



Crested Ibis by Clayton Burne

During our quest for the above target species, we should be well entertained by a number of other species in the Dongzhai area, including Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Masked Laughingthrush, Chinese Hwamei, Black-capped and Crested Kingfisher, Narcissus and Yellow-rumped Flycatcher Grey-capped Pygmy and Grey-headed Woodpecker, endemic Yellow-bellied Tit, Collared Finchbill, Mountain Bulbul, Rufous-faced Warbler, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, White-crowned Forktail and the scarce Tristram's Bunting.

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. Some long drives.
Photography		Good to very good, some purpose-built hides & blinds.
Annoyances		Several very early mornings, can be cool to cold along the coast.

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 17.
- 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.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18kg) for hand luggage.
- This tour requires a medium to good level of fitness, as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Accommodation in general is of a comfortable to excellent standard, while our guesthouse in Dongzhai is a little more basic.
- Western meals are not readily available in some areas. Coffee is not widely drunk in China, but we shall do our best to ensure that coffee is acquired and made available where possible. Alternatively, tea is very widely consumed.
- Tobacco smoking is prevalent across China, even in public areas and restaurants where it is apparently banned. We will of course do our best to avoid any restaurants where smoking is a problem, but avoiding all smoking in China is impossible.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins on day 1 with an arrival day in Shanghai, and you are welcome to arrive at any time before 17:00. The tour will conclude in Shanghai after breakfast on day 17.

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.

Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Shanghai (IATA: PVG) is the main port of entry and departure for this 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.