# China

## Yunnan Extension

## Sichuan Birding



**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 and visitors. 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 and partridges are of particular interest, and we will be on the lookout for an astonishing 17 species! These include White Eared and Blue Eared, Golden, Koklass, Blood and Lady Amherst's Pheasants, Temminck's Tragopan, Chinese Monal, Tibetan Partridge, Verreaux's Monal-Partridge and Chinese Grouse. The supporting cast includes an amazing 12 species of parrotbill including Great, Three-toed, Spectacled, Ashy-throated, Fulvous and Golden Parrotbills, as well as 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 and an amazing selection of laughingthrushes, warblers, snowfinches and rosefinches. Fascinating cultures, dramatic and breathtaking landscapes, plus a bounty of exceptional birds and mammals all make for one of the most rewarding birding experiences in all of Asia.*

*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 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 Fulvettas, Grey-headed and Brown-winged Parrotbills, Black-headed Greenfinch, Black-headed and Beautiful Sibias, Chinese Blue Flycatcher, Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler, Godlewski's Bunting, Black-bibbed Tit and, with much luck, the very rare White-speckled Laughingthrush and Mrs Hume's Pheasant.*

## *Itinerary & Map*

### Yunnan Extension

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| **Day 1** | **Chengdu, flight to Kunming, drive to Zixishan Nature Reserve** |
| **Day 2** | **Zixishan Nature Reserve to Gaoligongshan mountains** |
| **Day 3** | **Gaoligongshan mountains** |
| **Day 4** | **Gaoligongshan mountains to Lijiang** |
| **Days 5 & 6** | **Lijiang area** |
| **Day 7** | **Flight from Lijiang to Chengdu** |

### Sichuan Birding

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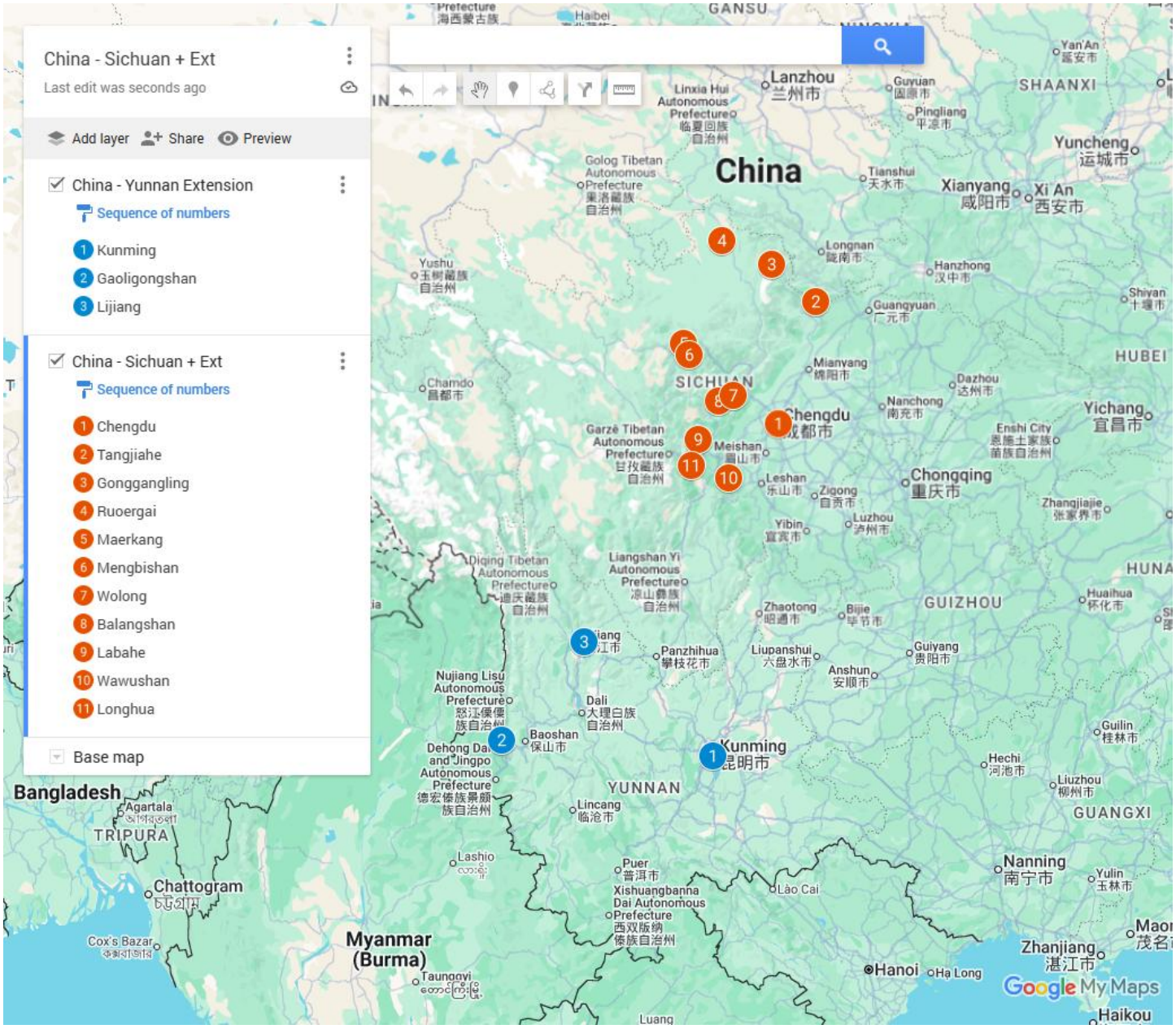
| **Day 1** | **Arrival in Chengdu** |
| **Day 2** | **Chengdu to Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve** |
| **Day 3** | **Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve** |
| **Day 4** | **Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve to Gonggangling** |
| **Day 5** | **Gonggangling to Ruoergai via the Baxi Valley** |
| **Day 6** | **Baxi Valley & Tibetan Plateau** |
| **Day 7** | **Ruoergai to Maerkang across the Tibetan Plateau** |
| **Day 8** | **Mengbishan mountain** |
| **Day 9** | **Maerkang to Wolong via Mengbishan mountain** |
| **Days 10 & 11** | **Balangshan mountain & Wolong Giant Panda Reserve** |
| **Day 12** | **Wolong to Labahe** |
| **Day 13** | **Labahe** |
| **Day 14** | **Labahe to Wawushan Nature Reserve** |
| **Days 15 & 16** | **Wawushan National Forest Park** |
| **Day 17** | **Wawushan National Forest Park to Longhua** |
| **Day 18** | **Longhua to Chengdu** |
| **Day 19** | **Final departure** |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4 Ruoergai
5 Maerkang
6 Mengbishan
7 Wolong
8 Balangshan
9 Labahe
10 Wawushan
11 Longhua
Base map
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Bangladesh
Myanmar (Burma)
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## *Birding sites in detail*



**Red-billed Leiothrix by Glen Valentine**

**Zixishan Nature Reserve.** From the provincial capital of Kunming (City of Eternal Spring), we'll drive south-west through the hilly terrain to Zixishan Nature Reserve. The surrounding coniferous and mixed broad-leaved forest are home to mouth-watering species that include Black-headed Greenfinch, Black-headed Sibia, Black-breasted and Chinese Thrushes, and Godlewski's Bunting.

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, Oriental Magpie, Ashy-throated Warbler, Brown-breasted Bulbul and White-browed 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 Fulvettas, White-tailed Robin, Rufous-capped Babbler, Blue-winged Minla, Chinese Vivid Niltava, Chinese Blue and Brown-breasted Flycatchers, Red-billed Leiothrix and Grey-crowned Warbler.

**Gaoligongshan.** This long chain of forested mountains run from north to south along the Burmese border and harbour an array of attractive specialities. We 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, 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.

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 Cupwing, Collared Owlet, handsome Yellow-cheeked Tit, richly-coloured Chestnut-crowned Warbler, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Bar-throated, Red-tailed and Blue-winged Minlas, Rusty-fronted Barwing and the shy and retiring Rufous-throated and Hill Partridges.



**Godlewski's Bunting by Glen Valentine**

The lower-altitude secondary forest supports Wedge-tailed and Pin-tailed Green Pigeons, Speckled Wood Pigeon,



**Rufous-throated Partridge by Glen Valentine**

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 specialities such as Rufous-throated and Mountain Bamboo Partridges, Red-tailed and Blue-winged Laughingthrushes, Beautiful and Black-headed Sibias, 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 Gaoligongshan 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 Brown-crowned Scimitar Babbler, while an evening excursion to the forest edge could yield Collared Scops Owl.



**Red-tailed Laughingthrush by Daniel Danckwerts**

**Gaoligongshan to Lijiang.** Essentially a travel day, 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, Eastern Red-rumped Swallow, Asian House and Pale Martins, Sooty-headed and Red-whiskered Bulbuls, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Long-tailed Shrike, Pied Bush Chat, Eurasian Tree



**The endemic Yunnan Nuthatch by Daniel Danckwerts**

Sparrow, Crested Bunting, Grey-breasted and Striated Prinias, Asian Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Oriental White-eye and Scaly-breasted Munia.

**Lijiang area.** Early this morning we will head out in search of Lijiang's prize birds in the forested slopes of the Jade Dragon Mountains, peaking at an incredible 5,000m (16,500ft). Although the peaks rise to that altitude, we will be birding between 2,000 and 2,800m (6,600–9,200ft) for most of the morning. Our aim is to find Lady Amherst's Pheasant. 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, Tickell's and Blyth's Leaf Warblers, Slaty-backed and Rufous-gorgeted Flycatchers, Rufous-tailed Babbler, 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.

North of Lijiang, the road 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'. 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 Eye-ringed 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.

Time permitting, we may visit a nearby wetland that usually harbours an array of waterbirds and interesting, thicket-associated species. Eurasian Wigeon and Ferruginous Duck are usually present, and we may also find Clamorous Reed Warbler, Dusky and Tickell's 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.



**Rufous-tailed Babbler (Moupinia) by Glen Valentine**



Golden-breasted Fulvetta by Daniel Danckwerts

**Chengdu.** We'll commence our birding of this bird-rich city in a nearby city park. Here we will be 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, Eastern Red-rumped Swallow, Black-throated Bushtit, Swinhoe's 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.

**Chengdu Botanical Gardens & surrounds.** If we still need one or two of the city's lowland species, we will make a quick stop at the Chengdu Botanical Gardens where we are likely to 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.

**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 Takin and Golden Snub-nosed Monkey. We have a good chance of seeing the Takin, but we'd be extremely fortunate to encounter the monkey as they generally live at or above the treeline in the summer months. Asian Black Bear and Greater 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 Pig, Reeves's Muntjac, Chinese Goral, Maned Serow, 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.



Przevalski's Nuthatch by Daniel Danckwerts



**Golden Takin 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 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, Alström'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, localised 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.



**Crested Tit-Warbler by David Hoddinott**

Our accommodation is situated in the heard of the park at an altitude of 1,400m (4,600ft).

**Mianyang area.** Winding our way westwards towards the Tibetan town of Mianyang, our journey takes us through a low-lying (600m/2,000ft), flat and extremely extensive valley that is blanketed by broad-leaved deciduous forest. Here we stand a good chance of seeing Collared Crow, on the off-chance



**Blue Eared Pheasant by Glen Valentine**

that we missed it previously, as well as the more regular Swinhoe's Minivet, Grey-backed and Long-tailed Shrikes, Eastern 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 4,000m (13,200ft). The scenery here is, like most of Sichuan, 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.

**Gonggangling Pass.** The pass crests at around 3,500m/11,500ft. We will spend time 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, 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 Treecreeper, Przevalski's Nuthatch, Collared and White-winged Grosbeaks, Grey-headed Bullfinch, Vinaceous Rosefinch, Spotted Nutcracker, Tibetan Serin, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Rufous-vented and Grey-crested Tits, Tickell's and Sichuan Leaf Warblers, Goldcrest, White-backed and Chestnut Thrushes, the beautiful Indian Blue Robin, and the powerful Northern Goshawk.

**Ruoergai – Baxi Valley.** During the early morning, one of our prime target species here is the superb Blue Eared Pheasant. 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 Elliot'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 White-backed and Chestnut Thrushes are usually present in reasonable numbers, and we may also encounter Godlewski's Bunting, Eurasian Wryneck and Yellow-streaked Warbler. We'll listen out for the distinctive songs of



**White-browed Tit-Warbler by David Hoddinott**



**Przevalski's Finch by Stephan Lorenz**

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 species perched up as they sing to attract their mates and proclaim their territories.

Mammals are also well represented in the Baxi Valley and the Maned Serow will be a key target.

**Ruoergai – 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 waterbody for new species 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-plumaged Citrine Wagtail (of the particularly beautiful black-backed race). 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-plumaged Tibetan 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.

**Ruoergai to Maerkang.** We embark on a long drive across the vast Tibetan Plateau (3,500m (11,500ft) towards the town of Maerkang. We will wind our way towards our first scheduled stop for the unique and much desired Przevalski's Finch (Pinktail). We will spend some 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.



**Black-necked Crane by Daniel Danckwerts**



**Firethroat by Daniel Danckwerts**

Continuing onwards, we will make regular stops for Horned Lark, Black-rumped 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 Greater Hog Badger, Eastern Roe Deer, Tibetan and Red Foxes, and Grey Wolf. 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.

**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 4,000m (13,200ft) 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 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 and Chinese Babax.

**The construction of a tunnel may cause this pass to be closed in the future.*

**Maerkang to Wolong.** Today is a lengthy travel day, roughly a six-hour journey towards the town of Wolong, 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.



**Fire-capped Tit by Daniel Danckwerts**

**Balangshan Mountain & Wolong Giant Panda Reserve.** We have several days to explore the wonderful Wolong Giant Panda Reserve and Balangshan Mountain.



**Temminck's Tragopan by Daniel Danckwerts**

Wolong 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 (6,600–11,500ft), 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, White-backed (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 Greater 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 Rufous-vented, Sichuan and Grey-crested Tits, White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstarts, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Claudia's, Tickell's and Sichuan Leaf Warblers, Rosy Pipit and Chestnut Thrush. Golden Eagle, Bearded and Himalayan Vultures, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Himalayan Buzzard are likely to be seen in flight



**Chinese Monal by David Hoddinott**



**Lady Amherst's Pheasant by Adam Riley**

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, Slaty Bunting, Barred Laughingthrush, the nomadic Tibetan Serin, Chestnut-crowned Bush Warbler and secretive Chinese race of Scaly-breasted Cupwing.

***The high Balangshan Pass (4,500m) that was part of our itinerary in previous years, has been closed.*

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.

**Labahe.** 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 1,400m (4,600ft) and 2,750m (9,000ft), where we stand an excellent chance of finding several rare and little-known species.

Most of our time will be spent birding above 2,000m (6,600ft) 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 Necklaced 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 a good chance of encountering several more Lady Amherst's Pheasants in these higher-altitude areas.



**White-collared Yuhina by Glen Valentine**

Lower down, we hope to see Lesser Cuckoo, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Yellow-browed and Coal Tits, Collared Finchbill, Black-browed



**Gray-hooded Parrotbill by Daniel Danckwerts**

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.

In addition to the incredible birdwatching opportunities, we stand an excellent chance of 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, Chinese 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 near-mythical creatures during our stay. Chinese Serow, Red-and-white Giant Flying Squirrel, Sambar, Greater Hog Badger, Mainland Leopard Cat and 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.

**Wawushan National Forest Park.** 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 a well-developed tourism infrastructure including a cable car that permits access to a range of habitats between 1,100m (3,600ft) near the base to 2,700m (8,900ft) at the summit. Here, we stand an excellent chance of finding several rare and little-known species.

Most of our time will be spent birding above 2,000m (7,000ft) where we hope to locate the inexplicably scarce Streaked Barwing, Spotted and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, Golden and White-browed Bush Robins, Hodgson's and Sichuan Treecreepers (this being the type locality for the latter species), Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, Darjeeling and Necklaced 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 Grey-hooded



**Emei Shan Liocichla by Glen Valentine**



**Sichuan Partridge by Daniel Danckwerts**

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 are 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 Alström's Warblers, Elliott's Laughingthrush, Fujian Niltava, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Short-billed and Long-tailed Minivets, Bay and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Great Barbet, impressive Red-billed Blue Magpie, Green and White-browed Shrike-Babblers, Hair-crested Drongo, and the difficult-to-see Pygmy Cupwing.

In addition to the incredible birdwatching opportunities, we stand an excellent chance of 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, Chinese 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, Greater Hog Badger, Mainland Leopard Cat and 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 Red Panda by Daniel Danckwerts**

**Longhua.** A brief visit to the Longhua area should offer us chances at the near-mythical and endemic Sichuan Partridge, a species that has only recently become 'gettable' thanks to a dedicated feeding station. Other key species that we may hope to see while waiting for the partridge include the shy Red-winged and Buffy Laughingthrushes, Emei Shan Liocichla, and perhaps Lady Amherst's and Silver Pheasants, and Temminck's Tragopan.

## *Tour Grading & Key*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall Ease** |  | Moderate to brisk-paced tour. 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. |
| **Walking / Trails** |  | Fair amount of walking, mostly on roads and tracks. One fairly arduous trail at Tangjiahe (optional) |
| **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. |

## *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 lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 7 of the Yunnan extension;
- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 19 of the Sichuan Tour; and;
- 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.**

- This 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 we do hike one rather arduous trail 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 full days' birding to find the maximum variety of species.
- Large crowds of local tourists are possible at some locations.
- 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. On several days we will be above 3,000m in elevation.
- Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
  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.
- Accommodation varies greatly in China, from excellent in the main centres to fairly basic in the more remote areas. Accommodations on this tour are generally of a comfortable standard, both on the Yunnan extension and the main Sichuan tour.
- We change accommodation regularly, so the more luggage you pack the less mobile you are. It is thus 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. Guests who are allergic to bees/other insect bites must carry the necessary medication.

## *Arrival and Departure Details*

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 an internal flight in the morning after breakfast of day 7.

The main tour will begin at our hotel in Chengdu on day 1. The first day of the tour is set aside as an arrival day. 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.

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.

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.**