India - Northeast

Eaglenest & Beyond

Mishmi Hills & Assam specialities



Himalayan Monal by David Hoddinott

These exotic birding adventures take us to many seldom visited and remote destinations in northeast India. We will have the rare opportunity to search for a host of Asia's most tantalising and desirable species, including the stunning Temminck's and Blyth's Tragopans, Ward's Trogon, exquisite Beautiful Nuthatch, endemic Bugun Liocichla, incredible Grandala, rare and endangered White-winged Duck, Swamp Francolin, dazzling Fire-tailed Myzornis, localised Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush and Collared Treepie – to name just some of the many exciting possibilities! These thrilling tours take us to some of Asia's best birding sites, where few birders have ever ventured, and we will no doubt encounter many rarely seen species!

We'll also be searching for a good number of mammals, primarily at Kaziranga National Park, one of the most spectacular wildernesses in all of Asia. This area gains its fame as one of the last places on earth where the prehistoric Indian Rhinoceros can be found, but no other site in Asia can match the vast herds of big mammals to be seen.

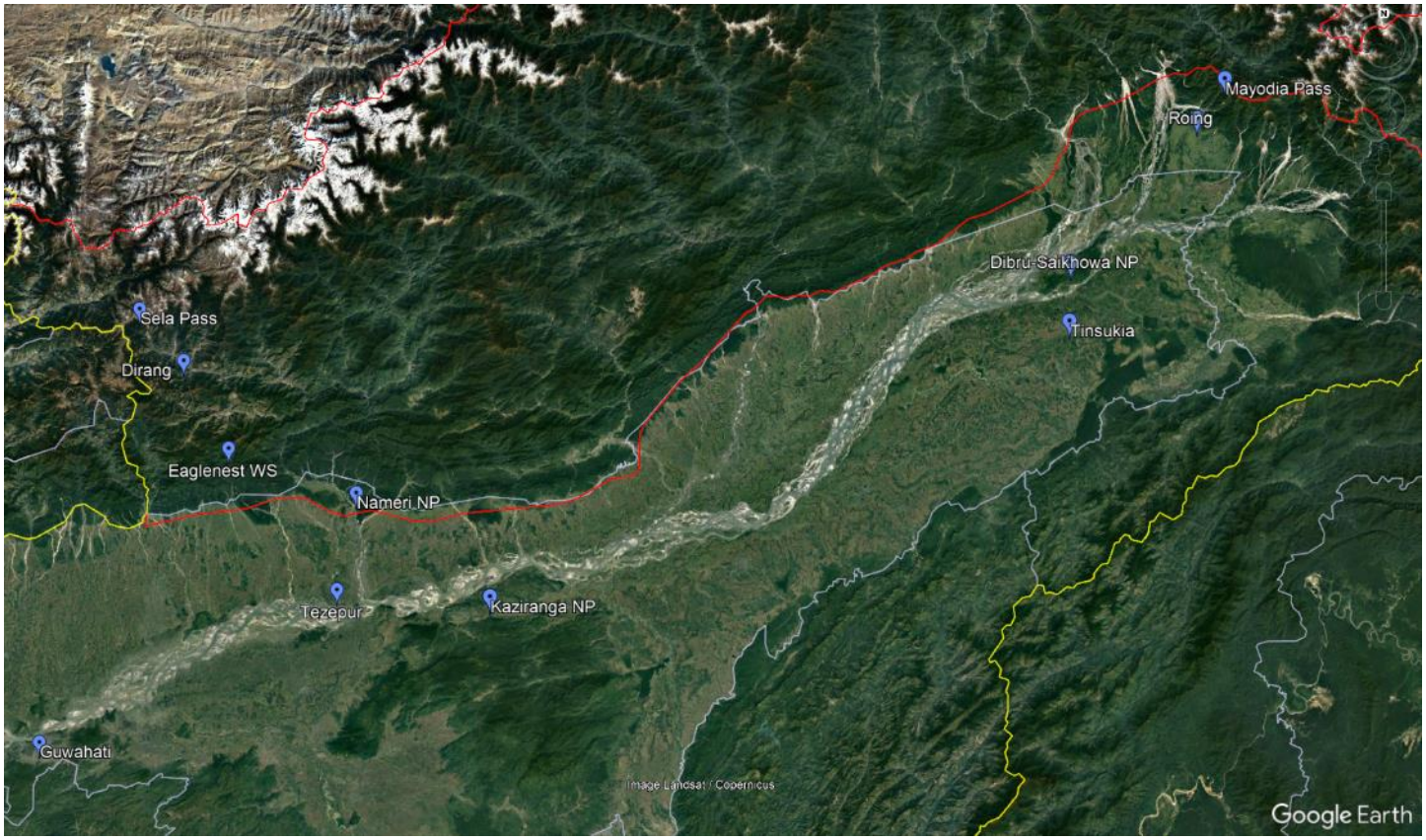
Itinerary & Map

Eaglenest & Beyond

Day 1	Guwahati to Nameri National Park
Day 2	Nameri National Park to Dirang (Sangti Valley)
Days 3 to 5	Mandala Phudong & Sela Pass areas
Day 6	Dirang to Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary
Days 7 to 11	Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (Lama, Bompu & Doimara)
Day 12	Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary to Guwahati
Day 13	Final departure

Mishmi Hills & Assam specialities

Day 1	Flight, Guwahati to Dibrugarh, transfer to Tinsukia
Day 2	Maguri Bill to Roing area
Days 3 to 5	Mishmi Hills (Roing & Mayodia)
Day 6	Roing to Tinsukia
Day 7	Dehing Patkai, Digboi & Dibru-Saikhowa area
Day 8	Tinsukia to Kaziranga National Park
Days 9 & 10	Kaziranga National Park
Day 11	Kaziranga National Park to Guwahati & final departure



Birding sites in detail



Golden-breasted Fulvetta by Glen Valentine

Nameri National Park. This wonderful reserve is contiguous with the Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh, together constituting an area of over 1 000km² (390 mi²) of semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous forest, and narrow strips of grassland along the beautiful crystal-clear, boulder-strewn rivers.

We have a day to explore the forested areas of this park for our main target – the highly endangered White-winged Duck. This large forest duck inhabits forested pools and slow-flowing river channels, and our chances of finding it are very good. Whilst searching for this rare species we will also be on the lookout for other forest denizens, including Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, seldom-seen Pied Falconet, spectacular Sultan Tit, Common Green Magpie, Greater and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes, Abbott's Babbler, Green-billed Malkoha, secretive Pale-chinned Blue Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied and Velvet-fronted Nuthatches, gigantic Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Red-breasted Parakeet, Vernal Hanging Parrot, the attractive and elusive Black-breasted Thrush, Black-hooded Oriole, Barred Cuckoo-Dove, Wreathed and magnificent Great Hornbills, Oriental Dollarbird, and the scarce Silver-backed Needletail overhead. Depending on the rains, we may even find Hooded Pitta during our forays through this wonderful reserve. Along the Kameng River, we will search for Great and Indian Stone-curlews, Red-wattled and River Lapwings, Small Pratincole and, with a healthy dose of luck, a lingering Ibisbill (although it is likely that they will all have moved to higher altitudes by the time of our visit).

Dirang (Sangti Valley). Dirang lies in the poorly explored East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, the north-easternmost state of India. The area forms the border between China and India and is situated just east of the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. The eastern Himalayan slopes form a varied and rich landscape and habitat with the most wonderful rainforest – rich with bird and animal life.

Target species include Grey-headed, White-breasted and Pale-billed Parrotbills, gregarious, White-hooded Babblers, Streak-throated Barwing, extremely elusive Pale-headed Woodpecker, Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher, Golden-breasted Fulvetta and Broad-billed Warbler. Other interesting species may include Yellow-bellied, Grey-cheeked and Yellow-vented Warblers, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon,



Fire-tailed Myzornis by Daniel Danckwerts



Grandala by Glen Valentine

Long-tailed Broadbill, Red-tailed, Blue-winged, and Bar-throated Minlas, Silver-eared Mesia, scarce White-naped Yuhina, Yellow-throated and Nepal Fulvettas, Long-tailed Minivet, handsome Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, and Hair-crested and Ashy Drongos.

Mandala – Phudung. The higher elevations of the Mandala to Phudung road hold several wonderful species and we will spend time scouring the area in search of these many specialities. Notable birds that we will be on the hunt for include the dazzling Fire-tailed Myzornis, Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, Spotted Laughingthrush, Stripe-throated and Rufous-vented Yuhinas, nomadic Golden-naped, Crimson-browed and Scarlet Finches, Grey-headed Bullfinch, Ferruginous and Slaty-blue Flycatchers, Chestnut-headed Tesia and the localised Brown-throated Fulvetta. We may also encounter a host of other lovely species, including soaring Himalayan Vulture, regal Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Russet Sparrow, striking Crested Bunting, Rosy Pipit, and the entertaining Brown Dipper, among many others.

Sela Pass. We'll explore the higher reaches of the Sela Pass (weather and conditions permitting) at an altitude of 4 170m (13 800ft). The scenery here is unsurpassed, and we will no doubt enjoy an amazing, bird-filled day. Some of the very special high-altitude species we will be on the lookout for include the spectacular Himalayan Monal, Blood Pheasant, Snow Partridge, the unique and rather bizarre Wallcreeper, Snow Pigeon, bold and demonstrative Yellow-billed Blue Magpie, curious Spotted Nutcracker, Red-billed Chough, high-flying Brandt's and Plain Mountain Finches, Collared Grosbeak, the stunning Grandala, Blue-fronted Redstart, Alpine and Rufous-breasted Accentors, rarely-seen Solitary Snipe, Himalayan Buzzard, Bearded Vulture, Plain-backed Thrush, White-collared and Tibetan Blackbirds, gorgeous Golden Bush Robin, eye-catching Chestnut-crowned and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, dazzling Fire-tailed Sunbird, Rosy Pipit, White-throated Dipper in the icy mountain streams, Eurasian Wren, Indian Blue Robin, and Pink-browed, Dark-breasted, Red-fronted and Himalayan White-browed Rosefinches.



Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler by Glen Valentine

Dirang to Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. After departing Dirang, we'll make a few stops searching for very special and often elusive birds, including Black-tailed Crake, the rare



Snow Partridge by Glen Valentine

Long-billed Plover, and the shy and seldom-seen Blyth's Kingfisher. We may also find Short-billed Minivet, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Black-chinned and Striated Yuhinas, Spot-winged Grosbeak, Rusty-fronted Barwing, difficult and shy Blue-winged and Scaly Laughingthrushes, and White-tailed Nuthatch.

Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. Eaglenest is a wonderfully diverse reserve, with altitudes ranging from 500 to 3 200m (1 640 to 10 500 ft) above sea level, and the park protects an impressive 218km² (over 100mi²) of fabulous forest habitat.

We have dedicated several full days to explore the splendours of Eaglenest, and we will visit a range of altitudes to enable us to find the host of excellent species that occur here.

Eaglenest has recently attracted a lot of attention in birding circles due to the discovery of a new species of laughingthrush, the Bugun Liocichla (described in 2006), which is named after the local tribe in the area. This is the only site on earth where this beautiful bird has been found and our chances of finding this enigmatic species are very good, though by no means guaranteed. The entire area offers excellent birding, and the list of tantalising specialities is almost endless. Of major significance, however, are Ward's Trogon, Purple and Green Cochoas, Black-crowned and Slender-billed Scimitar Babblers, stunning Himalayan Cutia, Black-headed Shrike-Babbler, Beautiful Nuthatch, exquisite and little-known Gould's Shortwing, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Long-billed Wren-Babbler and the seldom-seen Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler; we will try our best to locate as many of these highly desirable gems as possible.



Black-headed Shrike-Babbler by Glen Valentine



Beautiful Nuthatch by David Hoddinott

Other exciting and noteworthy species that we will be on the lookout for include the incredibly elusive Chestnut-breasted, Rufous-throated and Hill Partridges, Kalij Pheasant, Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle, Northern Goshawk, colourful Golden-throated Barbet, Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Collared Treepie, Little Forktail, unobtrusive Ashy Wood Pigeon, Black-throated Prinia, the scarce and erratic Brown Bullfinch, White-throated Needletail overhead, a range of laughingthrushes that include Blue-winged, Bhutan, White-crested, Black-faced, White-throated, Striated and Scaly, Red-faced Liocichla and, in areas of dense bamboo, Brown, White-breasted and Black-throated Parrotbills, as well as the superb but elusive Temminck's and Blyth's Tragopans.

Mixed species flocks attract the incredible black-and-yellow Sultan Tit, Long-tailed, Beautiful and Rufous-backed Sibias, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, range-restricted Brown-throated Fulvetta, Mrs Gould's, Green-tailed and Black-throated Sunbirds, Green Shrike-Babbler, Pygmy, Slaty-backed, Ultramarine and Sapphire Flycatchers, and the scarce and attractive Fire-capped Tit. The forest undergrowth supports a range of specialities too and we will search hard for the secretive White-browed and Lesser Shortwings, Pygmy and Scaly-breasted Cupwings, Rufous-throated and Eyebrowed Wren-Babblers, Spotted Elachura, White-tailed Robin, minuscule Chestnut-headed, Grey-bellied, and Slaty-bellied Tesias, as well as the rare and ultra-skulking Blue-fronted Robin.

Guwahati. We will make a stop at the local refuse dump that attracts hundreds of regal Greater Adjutants, a rare and extremely localised bird throughout most of its limited range. Guwahati remains the best place on earth to see this stately, yet also very ugly stork, with smaller numbers of the more widespread Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill and Black-headed Ibis also being attracted to this site. Citrine and White Wagtails are usually around in good numbers, while Striated Grassbird and Plain and Yellow-bellied Prinias will be looked for in areas of rank grass.



Greater Adjutants by Nigel Redman



Maroon-backed Accentor by Glen Valentine

Mishmi Hills (Roing & Mayodia). We will be visiting multiple birding sites at different elevations and habitats in the Mishmi Hills, home to an incredible diversity of birds, including many rare and local species. We'll be here for several days to ensure we have sufficient time to search for the many shy species between bouts of wet weather.

The Mishmi Hills have had little ornithological exploration. After being described in 1947, the Mishmi Wren-Babbler was not seen again until 2004! Since then, a small number of birders have visited the area. During our stay, we will explore the extensive forests along the lightly trafficked Roing-Hunli Road.

The high-elevation bamboo and roadside scrub are home to several target species such as Rusty-bellied Shortwing, restricted-range Manipur Fulvetta, stunning Fire-tailed Myzornis here and restricted-range Cachar Wedge-billed Babbler. We are likely to get good views of Dark-rumped Rosefinch, Maroon-backed Accentor, Rufous-breasted Bush Robin, Himalayan Cutia and Beautiful Nuthatch, several of which are more confiding in this area due to the very limited traffic distrubance.

If luck is on our side, we could find the very desirable Blyth's Tragopan, both Hill, Chestnut-breasted and Rufous-throated Partridges, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Eyebrowed Wren-Babbler, Pale-billed Parrotbill, Blue-fronted Robin, Fulvous Parrotbill, both Green and Purple Cochoas, Rufous-backed Sibia, Blyth's Swift and Crimson-browed Finch.



Hill Partridge by David Hoddinott

Dehing Patkai. A hidden gem in Assam, just an hour's drive from the city of Tinsukia. This sparsely populated, well forested area is easily birded along the access road. It is home to several key regional specialties, including Rufous-throated Fulvetta, Grey Peacock-Pheasant, notoriously shy White-cheeked Partridge and Austen's Brown Hornbill (probably the best site in the world for this species). Other notable species include Silver-breasted Broadbill, White-crowned Forktail, Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, Speckled Piculet, Sultan Tit, White-bellied Erpornis, and Large Scimitar-Babbler.



Rufous-necked Hornbill by Glen Valentine

Digboi. Also known as the 'Oil City of Assam', we'll bird the logged hillsides (now restored and undisturbed) for the very localised Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush, sought after Collared Treepie and a small chance for the tricky White-cheeked Partridge.

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park. Wedged between the Brahmaputra and Dibru Rivers, the national park protects a mosaic of swamp forest, grassland, and shallow wetlands. We will spend most of our time searching for the grassland specialities along the banks of the Dibru River, particularly the elusive Marsh Babbler, impressive Black-breasted Parrotbill and the shy, skulking Jerdon's Babbler. We'd need a good amount of luck to find the increasingly scarce Swamp Grass Babbler. We'll keep an eye on the Dibru River itself for the endangered Ganges River Dolphin.

Kaziranga National Park. This exciting wilderness of marshes, open grassland, woodlands and forest, which is situated on the floodplain of the Brahmaputra River, will be the focus of our attention. A total of one-third of the entire world population of Indian Rhinoceros is located in Kaziranga and we will likely enjoy incredible sightings of these highly threatened beasts. The area is also home to many eye-catching and very special birds including the rare Bengal Florican, which will be searched for in the long grass that covers huge areas of the reserve, though we will have to be lucky to see this extremely rare species! This habitat will also give us our best shots at other high priority species such as the near-endemic Swamp Francolin, Baya, Streaked, Black-breasted and the extremely rare Finn's Weavers, as well as Chestnut-capped and Striated Babblers, Bengal Bush Lark, Rosy Pipit and Siberian and Himalayan Rubythroats. The critically endangered Greater Adjutant occurs alongside the Lesser Adjutant in wet areas, and we will keep our eyes peeled skywards for Pallas's and Grey-headed Fish Eagles. Western Marsh and Pied Harriers can be found quartering over the grassland areas, and the stately Black-necked Stork is still fairly numerous throughout the region.



Jerdon's Babbler by Stephan Lorenz

Kaziranga's network of extensive wetlands is home to huge numbers of resident and migrant waterbirds, most notably the handsome Bar-headed Goose, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas and the splendid Stork-billed Kingfisher, among many other species. Woodland areas are the best place to search for a number of specials, including the huge Blue-bearded, Blue-tailed and stunning Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, Green Imperial Pigeon, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Large Woodshrike, Lineated, Blue-throated and Coppersmith Barbets, extravagant Green-billed Malkoha, four species of gorgeous parakeets (Rose-ringed, Alexandrine, Red-breasted and the scarce Blossom-



Indian Rhinoceros by André Bernon

headed) and a host of woodpeckers, which includes Streak-throated, Fulvous-breasted and Grey-capped Pygmy, as well as Greater and Black-rumped Flamebacks. We will also explore small patches of evergreen forest in the area where we hope to find numerous interesting species. These include the striking Asian Fairy Bluebird, Black-crested Bulbul and Great and Oriental Pied Hornbills. More secretive species include Puff-throated and Abbott's Babblers and White-rumped Shama. Other notable birds that we hope to see here are Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Common Emerald Dove, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Streaked Spiderhunter and Crimson and Ruby-cheeked Sunbirds.

Game viewing in the reserve is excellent and besides the Indian Rhinoceros, there are also plenty of wild Water Buffalo and Asian Elephant. Furthermore, Kaziranga is one of the reserves where Bengal Tiger still occurs in reasonable numbers; here they tend to favour areas where the grass is long and dense, which aids them in ambushing their main prey, the increasingly rare Barasingha (Swamp Deer) and Hog Deer. We will, however, be lucky to encounter one of these regal beasts. While in the forests we will also keep our eyes and ears open for Hoolock Gibbon, Capped Langur, Assam Macaque and Rhesus Monkey. Other mammal species we may find include Sambar and Wild Boar, all of which frequent the grassy, watery meadows in the reserve.



Bengal Florican by Adam Riley

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Challenging. This is a Mega-style tour designed for the avid lister & serious birder. Not suited for dedicated photographers, inexperienced birders, or anyone with mobility or serious health challenges.
Birding Ease		Challenging. Many skulking, shy species. Several are low density.
Accommodation		Variable. Comfortable in larger towns, homestays in villages & tents at Eaglenest. This is a very remote part of India, hotel standards are not comparable to other similar sized towns even in India.
Walking / Trails		Mostly roadside birding with easy to moderate walks.
Vehicles / Roads		Reasonable quality surfaced roads in some areas, unsurfaced gravel roads in others.
Photography		Can be decent. No dedicated hides. More challenging in forested environments.
Annoyances		Some time at very high altitude with variable weather. Rain is possible every day. Many very early starts.

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 12 of the Eaglenest & Beyond tour;
- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 11 of the Mishmi Hills & Assam tour;
- 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 notice 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 programme as possible.**

- Be aware that the Sela Pass is at an altitude of around 4 170m (13 800ft). This can cause altitude problems for some people. The temperature will also be on the low side. We can expect rain and possibly even snow on Sela Pass.
- At Dirang, we will stay at a homestay. Whilst recently built, the accommodation is still quite basic.
- At Eaglenest we will stay a long way from any solid accommodations or civilisation and will be using camping facilities set up by our agents. These will be fairly spacious walk-in, comfortable-for-two tents with a proper bed or mattress to sleep on. Blankets or similar, sheets and pillows will also be provided. However, you are welcome to bring your own sleeping bag if you prefer.
- There is no running water at Eaglenest. Hot water is available in buckets/bowls for washing on demand.
- If participants would prefer a tent to themselves, please advise the office. Single tent space is limited and will be assigned in order of tour registration.
- While the food is generally good and tasty, it can become quite monotonous as not many different dishes are prepared. The food is often mainly vegetarian can also be spicy at times.
- It is important for the comfort of you and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44 lb) for check-in luggage and 8kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.
- In areas that contain potentially dangerous animals, you will be confined to the vehicle and are, quite understandably, not allowed to exit.
- Internet provision is scarce and unreliable throughout. It is recommended that you obtain a local SIM card in Delhi or Guwahati which will allow you to communicate from most sites, even the remote Eaglenest (somewhat variably).
- Machine washing/drying is non-existent, and only hand washing, and natural drying is possible. Turnaround time may be delayed depending on the local weather conditions, so you may wish to pack more clothing than you typically do.
- Power cuts are quite normal, though they tend not to last particularly long. Electricity is provided for only a few hours each day by generator at Eaglenest.
- These tours are not available to nationals (and other nationals having their origin in these countries) of China, Pakistan or Afghanistan due to Restricted Area Permit requirements to enter Arunachal Pradesh and/or Assam.

Our Mega tours are very fast-paced birding adventures designed for the dedicated lister and serious birder. The focus of the tour is to see as many of the endemics and area specials as possible in our given time. To cover the necessary route to maximise the species list we often spend a single night at sites and travel large distances. There is very little down time aside from that spent driving from one site to the next. These tours are not suitable for dedicated or avid photographers, inexperienced or new birders, as well as anyone with serious mobility or health challenges.

Arrival and Departure Details

The Eaglenest & Beyond tour departs from Guwahati on the morning of day 1 heading to Nameri National Park area and concludes after breakfast on day 13 in Guwahati.

The Mishmi Hills & Assam tour departs from Guwahati on the morning of day 1 with a flight to Dibrugarh and concludes around midday on day 11 in Guwahati.

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.

Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi (IATA: DEL) is the main port of entry for international flights into India. Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati (IATA: GAU), is most easily reached by domestic flights from Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore.

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 authorisation in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

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