Taiwan

Spring Birding

31st May to 11th June 2024 (12 days)



Mikado Pheasant by Glen Valentine

Taiwan is not only home to a staggering number of Asia's most wonderful avifauna but is also host of many other highlights that make it the perfect destination for a comfortable and relaxing birding tour. With 29 currently recognised endemics and a further 15 distinctive endemic subspecies, not to mention the incredible East-Asian Flyway, Taiwan has much to offer both the serious and casual birder alike. Located 100 km east of China, just south of Japan and Korea, and slightly north of the Philippines, this small island is less than 400 km long and 150 km wide with rugged central mountains interspersed with deep valleys and boasts a high biodiversity in a very manageable package.

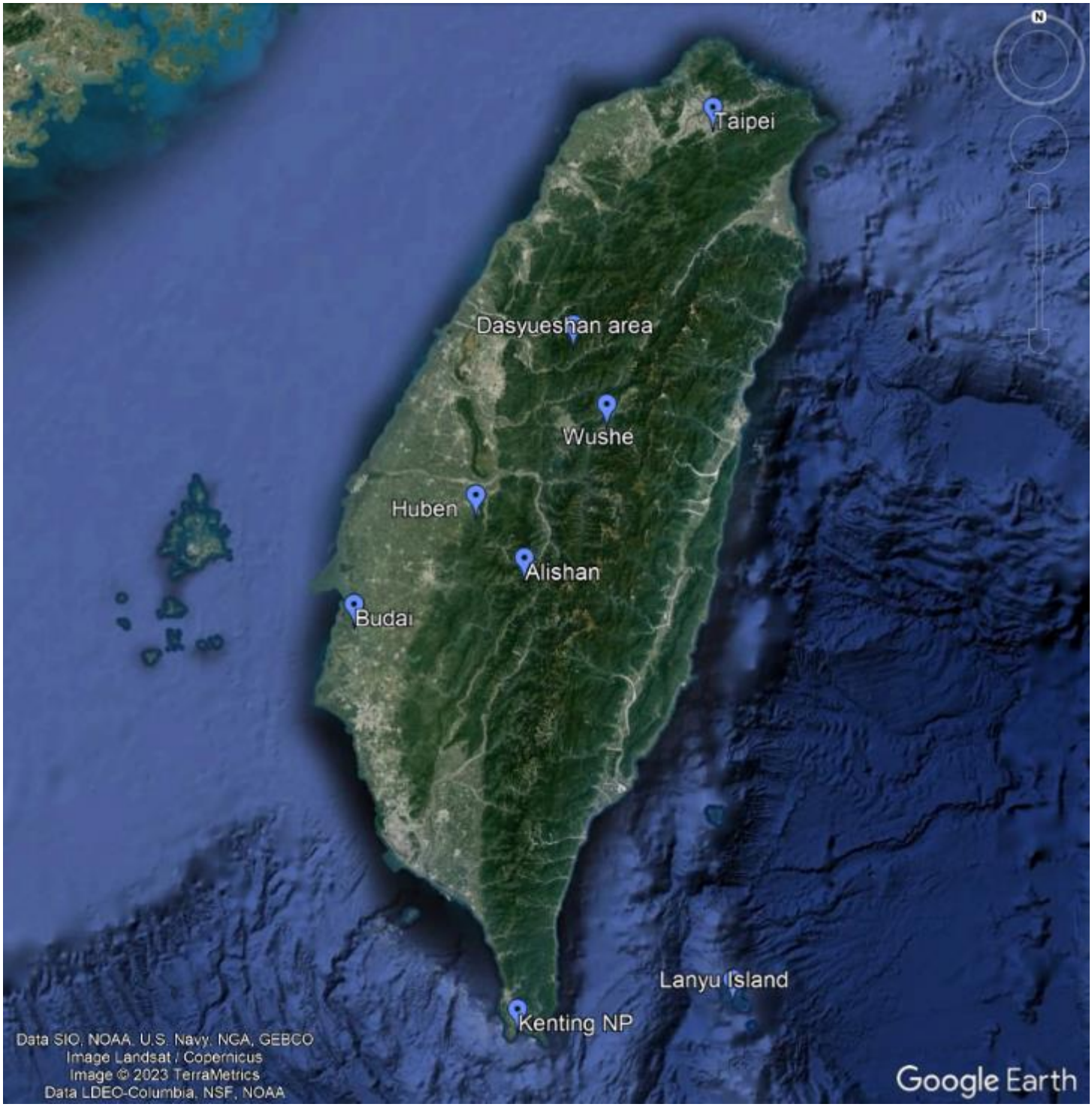
Our Taiwan in Spring tour is a comprehensive birding tour of Taiwan that focuses on the endemics and other East Asian specialities in the nation's largely pristine and well protected forests. Highlights will include legendary species like the magnificent Swinhoe's and Mikado Pheasants, Taiwan Partridge, the spectacular Taiwan Blue Magpie, Chestnut-bellied and Yellow Tits, Black-necklaced Scimitar Babbler, the incredible Flamecrest, Collared Bush Robin, Taiwan Whistling Thrush, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Steere's Liocichla, Rufous-crowned, Rusty and White-whiskered Laughingthrushes, Malayan Night Heron, Chinese Egret, Black-faced Spoonbill, the exquisite Fairy Pitta, Japanese Paradise Flycatcher and Ryukyu (Lanyu) Scops Owl to mention just a few! Most

of our time will be spent in the mountains, but we will allow some time in the lowlands and along the coast to search for wetland and coastal species: Lanyu (Orchid) Island in particular harbours several very interesting birds, including various endemic sub-species and other specialities that are otherwise very difficult to see anywhere else.

When circumstances allow, we will also make time for exploring and enjoying the numerous other aspects of Taiwan's natural biodiversity, the fascinating human culture and, of course, for chasing any reported notable vagrants! In addition, the Taiwanese are a super-friendly and welcoming people who have blended the best parts of unspoiled, traditional Chinese culture with the influence of colonial Japan and the native Austronesian culture. Taiwan is free and democratic, has good infrastructure and is extremely safe for tourists, all of which should ensure a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding birding adventure!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Taipei**
Day 2	**Shimen Reservoir & northern coast**
Day 3	**Middle & Upper Dasyueshan Road**
Day 4	**Lower & Middle Dasyueshan Road & Tainan**
Day 5	**Lower & Middle Dasyueshan Road & Budai Wetlands area**
Day 6	**Budai Wetlands, drive to Huben area (Fairy Pitta quest) via Jacana Reserve**
Day 7	**Huben to Kenting, ferry to Lanyu Island**
Day 8	**Lanyu Island, ferry to Kenting & drive to Alishan area**
Day 9	**Alishan area (Yushan NP)**
Day 10	**Alishan to Wushe area**
Day 11	**Taroko National Park & Hehuan Pass to northeast coast**
Day 12	**Jinshan area to Taipei & final departure**


Taipei
Dasyueshan area
Wushe
Huben
Alishan
Budai
Lanyu Island
Kenting NP
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Image © 2023 TerraMetrics
Data LDEO-Columbia, NSF, NOAA
Google Earth

Birding sites in detail



Taiwan Partridge by Glen Valentine

Shimen Reservoir. The forested hills to the south of Taipei are a stronghold for some species trickier to find elsewhere such as the spectacular Taiwan Blue Magpie, Taiwan Whistling Thrush, Black-necklaced Scimitar Babbler and Dusky Fulvetta. While searching for these key targets, we should also encounter Taiwan Barbet, Grey-cheeked (Morrison's) Fulvetta, White-bellied Erpornis, Rufous-capped Babbler and Rufous-faced Warbler. With luck we may also find some of the area's rarer species that could include Plain Flowerpecker, Grey-streaked Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Tit, Maroon (Red) Oriole, Silver-backed Needletail or the secretive but vocal Taiwan Bamboo Partridge. The valleys here are also home to several species of raptor and we may very well encounter Besra, Japanese Sparrowhawk, Black Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Black Kite, and Western Osprey during our morning explorations.

Dasyueshan Road (Lower, Middle & Upper). We'll have the equivalent of three full days to explore this large, diverse, and bird-rich area. In doing so, we'll undoubtedly encounter a huge number of Taiwan's incredible endemics that are available along this superb birding road. The Dasyueshan Road is one of those very special and justifiably famous birding areas that meanders through pristine and endemics-rich mid and high elevation mixed broadleaf, coniferous and bamboo forest between 1500 and 3000m in elevation. There's no doubt that the Dasyueshan Road will produce some of our most productive and memorable birding of the trip and by the time we've left the area we are likely to have already seen around 90% of the island's endemics!

In the lower elevation, scrubby areas around Dongshi town we'll search for Taiwan Hwamei, Striped Prinia and Vinous-throated Parrotbill, while other noteworthy species that are likely to be encountered include Collared Finchbill, Brown-flanked Bush Warbler, White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias, Yellow-bellied Prinia and Chestnut-tailed Starling.



Taiwan Blue Magpie by Glen Valentine

Lower elevation secondary forest, edge and riparian habitats will hopefully produce the scarce and extremely local Chestnut-bellied Tit, as well as Brown Dipper, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Taiwan Scimitar Babbler, Plumbeous



Swinhoe's Pheasant by Glen Valentine

Water Redstart, Malayan Night Heron, Grey-chinned Minivet, White-bellied Erpornis, Grey Treepie and Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Bronzed Drongo, Oriental Turtle Dove, Striated and Pacific Swallows, Rufous-capped Babbler, Taiwan Barbet, and the striking Black Bulbul.

As we meander our way higher up this legendary birding road, we will keep an eye open for the spectacular Swinhoe's Pheasant, the shy and unobtrusive Taiwan Partridge, the smart-looking Taiwan Vivid Niltava, White-backed (Owston's) and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, the vociferous but shy and unobtrusive Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Oriental Cuckoo, Black Eagle, Asian House Martin, Rusty Laughingthrush, Steere's Liocichla, White-tailed Robin, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Green-backed and the uncommon but striking Yellow Tits, Black-throated Bushtit, the cute Rufous-faced Warbler, White-eared Sibia, the common and lively Taiwan Yuhina, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, the partially diurnal Collared Owlet and if we are extremely lucky, the rare, elusive and nomadic Taiwan Thrush, while mammals could include Formosan Rock Macaque, Pallas's and Perny's Long-nosed Squirrels, Taiwan Serow and Reeve's Muntjac.

The beautiful and verdant *Trochodendron* and pine forest higher up with its dense bamboo understory is home to the scarce and nomadic Ashy Wood Pigeon, the local sub-species of Eurasian Jay, Taiwan, and Brown Bullfinches and the rare and elusive Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, while a nearby waterfall is home to Little Forktail. Our main target in the forest at the top of the road is the graceful Mikado Pheasant. While staking them out along the road or at the forest edge at the top, we're likely to be entertained by the very confiding White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Coastal Striped Squirrel. In the same area, we'll also be alert for White-browed (Sombre) and the smart Collared Bush (Johnstone's) Robins, Taiwan Rosefinch,



Taiwan Yuhina by Glen Valentine



Steere's Liocichla by Glen Valentine

Taiwan Cupwing and the very smart Flamecrest. As we enter the hemlock and dwarf bamboo forest at the highest point, we will meet the distinctive local subspecies of Spotted Nutcracker and Coal Tit, as well as (Taiwan) Yellow-bellied and Taiwan Bush Warblers, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Barwing, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, and Taiwan Shortwing. As for the views here, they are simply breath-taking: in the distance we'll see Taiwan's highest peak, Yushan, just short of 4 000 meters (13 000ft).

In the evenings there will be the option to search for Mountain and Collared Scops Owls.

Budai Wetlands. We'll have time on at least one afternoon and/or morning to explore the vast Budai Wetlands where the extensive ponds, mudflats and marshy edges may yield noteworthy, target species like Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns, Oriental Pratincole, Slaty-breasted Rail, Chinese Egret and Black-faced Spoonbill. Other more readily encountered species include Intermediate Egret, Osprey, Black-winged Kite, Pied Avocet, Whiskered, White-winged, Caspian and Little Terns, Common Kingfisher, and Ruddy-breasted Crake. Although a bit late in the season for winter waders, there will likely still be small numbers of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Kentish and Pacific Golden Plovers, Terek, Marsh, and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked and Long-toed Stints, Grey-tailed Tattler and Eurasian Curlew hanging around. If we are very fortunate, we may even find a Great Knot, Asian Dowitcher, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Far Eastern Curlew or Roseate Tern in the mix.

Scrubby embankments could hold Zitting and Golden-headed Cisticolas, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Chestnut-tailed and White-shouldered Starlings, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Long-tailed Shrike.

Jacana Reserve. The nearby Jacana Reserve usually harbours good numbers of the immaculate Pheasant-tailed Jacana in exquisite full breeding plumage along with White-breasted Waterhen, Greater Painted-snipe, Oriental Pratincole and Lesser Coucal, among large numbers of other widespread species and is well worth a visit while we're in the area.



Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush by Glen Valentine

Huben area (Fairy Pitta quest). Our primary focus in the humid forest and bamboo thickets in the Huben area will be finding the region's breeding Fairy Pitta for which we will visit some well-known areas. Our chance of seeing this sought-after



Black-faced Spoonbill by Glen Valentine

species is very good and we also hope to encounter several other notable species while searching for the pitta such as Collared Finchbill, Black-necklaced and Taiwan Scimitar Babblers, Maroon (Red) and Black-naped Orioles, Dusky and Grey-cheeked Fulvettas, Grey Treepie, Common Emerald Dove, Taiwan Bamboo Partridge, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-naped Monarch, Taiwan Barbet, Black-winged Cuckooshrike and White-rumped Shama.

Kenting area. Our main target species in the Kenting area, on the extreme south-eastern tip of the island will be the range restricted and endemic Styan's Bulbul, which we should have no trouble finding. Other species that inhabit this dry, scrubby habitat include Common and Barred Buttonquails, White-cheeked Starling, Golden-headed and Zitting Cisticolas, Yellow-bellied and Plain Prinias, Striated Swallow and Savanna Nightjar.

Lanyu Island ferry. To reach the tropical offshore island of Lanyu (Orchid), we'll take the ferry across the open ocean for 2 and a half hours. During the crossing, we'll keep our eyes peeled for Bulwer's Petrel and Streaked Shearwater, our two main targets for the journey. Other interesting species that might pitch up include Brown Booby and Bridled Tern, while Common Dolphins and flying fish will also undoubtedly make an appearance.

Lanyu Island. With a unique and distinctive culture, fauna and flora that is far more typical of the Philippines and Pacific region, Lanyu is a pleasant contrast to mainland Taiwan.

Excellent birding is possible right along the road from a well-located bridge that cuts through a section of lush forest canopy, after which we will enter the darker inner forest via a good trail. Forest specialties on offer here include Taiwan Green Pigeon, Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, Brown-eared Bulbul, Japanese Paradise Flycatcher, Ryukyu Scops Owl (the local sub-species sometimes split as Lanyu Scops Owl), Lowland White-eye and Northern Boobook (the subspecies here sometimes split as Ryukyu Boobook). Blue Rock Thrush can also be expected, while Pacific Swifts on passage through the area, can sometimes be seen cruising by overhead, while the stunning Magellan Birdwing will also undoubtedly entertain us at the forest edge.



Fairy Pitta by Glen Valentine

We will also explore fields and small wetlands where the local Tao aborigines grow Taro (a starchy tuber that forms their staple diet. If we're fortunate, there might be one or two passerines lurking about during their passage between South-east Asia and China such as Little or Black-faced Buntings. Tall, moist grass and bushes at the forest edge support Lesser Coucal and



Japanese Paradise Flycatcher by Glen Valentine

Brown Shrike, while the rocky and sandy coastline may turn up the clean-cut and very attractive Black-naped Tern and both dark and white morphs of Pacific Reef Heron.

Alishan area. The scenic and bird rich Alishan area and Yushan National Park is an excellent back-up site for all of Taiwan's forest endemics and specialties that were searched for along the Dasyueshan Road. At a similar altitude and habitat, many of these now-familiar species will be enjoyed once again and we'll also have further chances of encountering any species we may have missed at Dasyueshan. Like the Dasyueshan area, the scenery is spectacular, and we are bound to have a fabulous time birding and traversing the Alishan area.

Potential exciting new birds could include Golden Parrotbill, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Bullfinch, Taiwan Rosefinch, the rare but stunning Taiwan Thrush, Taiwan Shortwing, Taiwan Partridge, and Mountain Hawk-Eagle, all of which can be quite tricky to find in the Dasyueshan area. The upper reaches of Yushan National Park also provide our best chance of seeing the sometimes-elusive Mikado Pheasant, especially if conditions are overcast and drizzly. Other fabulous Taiwanese species we'll likely encounter during our time in the area include Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, Collared and White-browed (Sombre) Bush Robins, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Taiwan Bush Warbler, while more widespread species such as Black Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Green-backed Tit, Black-throated Bushtit and Spotted Nutcracker are also likely to appear.

Taroko National Park & Hehuan Pass. We have most of a day to explore the immensely scenic Taroko National Park in the Hehuan district that bounds with spectacular Taiwanese endemic birds. Our morning's birding is likely to begin near the head of Hehuan Pass, the highest road east of the Himalayas (at over 3,300 meters (10800ft)), where the vistas are indeed breath-taking and where Collared Bush Robin, White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Eurasian Wren often hop around one's feet. The pass is also an excellent place to see Taiwan Bush Warbler, Taiwan Fulvetta and Taiwan Rosefinch. Well also stop to scan an area of rocky scree for the endemic subspecies of Alpine Accentor. Nearby, we can expect views of (Taiwan) Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler, the endearing and endemic Flamecrest and Grey-headed (Owston's) Bullfinch. The dense, broad-leaved hill-forest lower down in the Blue Gate Track area will be explored if we still need some of the trickier mid-elevation species such as Yellow Tit, Rusty Laughingthrush and Taiwan Thrush. This area will also likely yield further views of the noisy Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, Taiwan Vivid Niltava and Fire-breasted



Ryukyu (Lanyu) Scops Owl by Glen Valentine

Flowerpecker, while flocks of fast-flying Silver-backed Needletail and Pacific Swift are sometimes seen overhead.



Taiwan Whistling Thrush by Glen Valentine

Jinshan area. The north-eastern coastline in the Jinshan area can be a productive area and makes for an enjoyable and productive end to this remarkable birding adventure. The wetlands support fair numbers of waterbirds that could include Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Greater Painted-snipe, Little Ringed Plover, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Chinese Pond Heron, Osprey and Purple Heron. The long and short grass, reeds and bushes surrounding the waterbodies support Lesser Coucal, Eastern Yellow, and Grey Wagtails, Yellow-bellied and Plain Prinias, Oriental Skylark, Brown and Long-tailed Shrikes, Black-collared Starling, Javan and scarce Crested Mynas, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Golden-headed Cisticola, Light-vented Bulbul and Grey-throated Martin.

Taipei National Botanical Gardens. Introductory birding at the Taipei National Botanical Gardens can be very rewarding and enjoyable indeed. Nestled within the bustling, thriving, lush and humid city of Taipei, the National Botanical Gardens protects a small tract of native habitat within a sea of urbanisation. It is indeed quite remarkable how bird-rich the gardens and surrounding suburbs can be and we can expect encounters with specialities such as Malayan Night Heron, the beautiful Taiwan Barbet and Taiwan Scimitar Babbler amongst more widespread but no less attractive and enjoyable species like the abundant Light-vented and Black Bulbuls, Swinhoe's White-eye, Oriental Magpie, Black-naped Monarch, vociferous Oriental Magpie-Robin and White-rumped Shama, Grey Treepie, Crested Goshawk, Scaly-breasted Munia, White-breasted Waterhen and Red Turtle Dove.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Undemanding. Rewarding tour with good food, accommodation, vehicles, spectacular scenery, etc.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy but forest birding & certain species can be a bit challenging at times.
Accommodation		Mostly good hotels, a few simple lodgings in smaller, more remote areas (ie: Lanyu Island)
Walking / Trails		Easy walking along roads & good, wide tracks or trails. Some forest trails that are generally easy & well-maintained
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality roads & vehicle, mostly short drives of 2-3 hours.
Photography		Worthwhile to good. No dedicated hides. Can be more challenging in forest environments.
Annoyances		Can be hot & humid in lowlands, some rain in mountains.

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 lunch on day 12;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- 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 is a traditional fast-paced birding tour with only a moderate amount of walking on usually good surfaces.
- There will be three or four journeys of about 2-3 hours each throughout the trip, mostly done after dark on good freeways.
- Although this Taiwan tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- The vehicles used are comfortable 9-seater VW vans.
- A fair bit of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover fair distances to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack, the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.
- It is best to change currency into Taiwan Dollars (NT$) on arrival at the airport.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts on day 1 with an arrival day in Taipei, do arrive by 17:00 to enjoy a welcome dinner. The tour will conclude after lunch on day 12 at Taipei Airport.

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.

Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei (IATA: TPE) is the main port of entry for international flights into Taiwan.

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.