# Thailand

## Highlights (Relaxed)

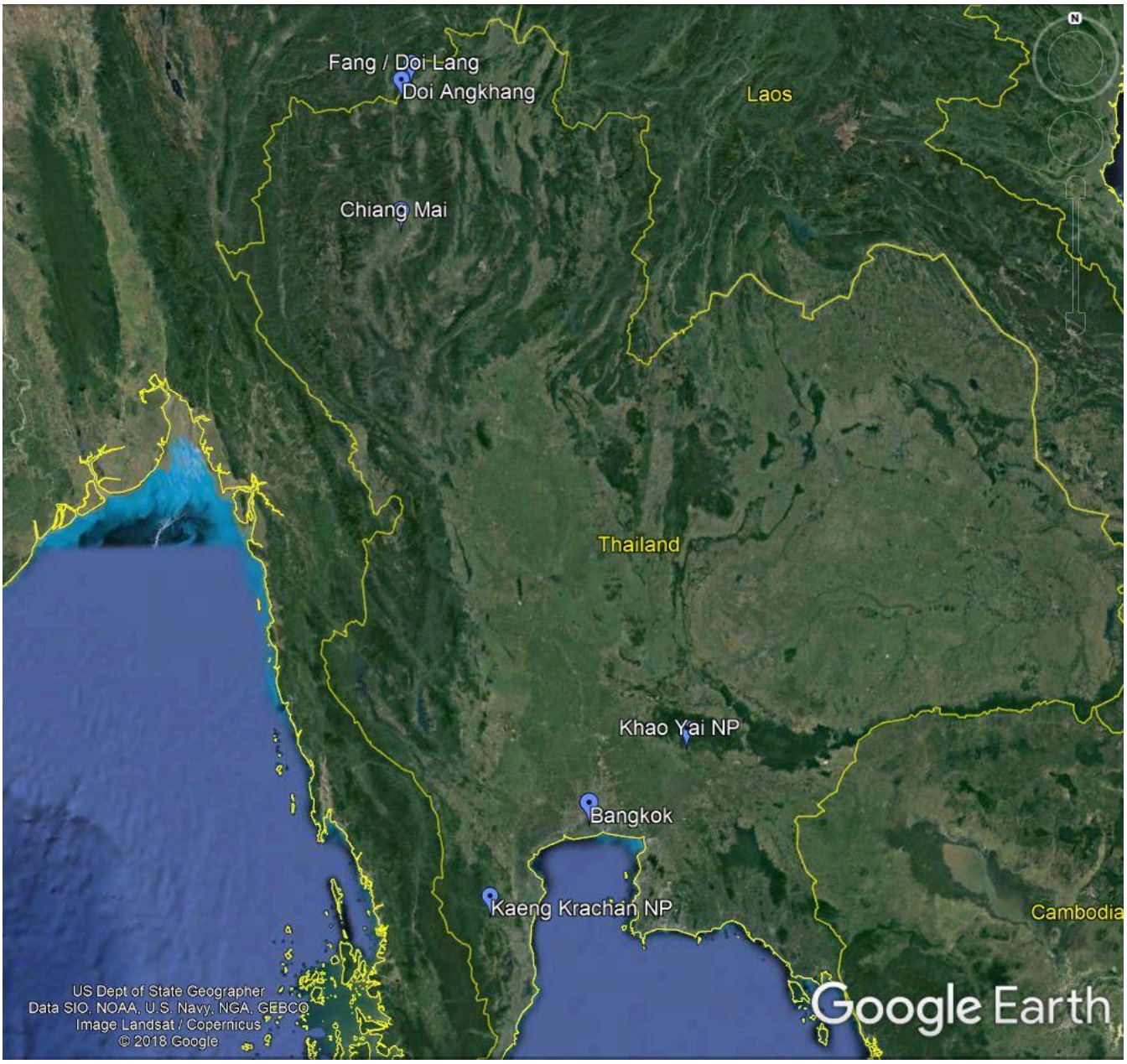


**Black-and-yellow Broadbill by David Hoddinott**

*Our Thailand Highlights tour is designed around the very best birding sites in Northern and Central Thailand, offering a superb selection of spectacular and sought-after south-east Asian specials, along with a huge array of migrants from the north that spend the frigid winters in these warmer climes. Some of the many mouth-watering targets include the stunning Green Peafowl, Siamese Fireback, Silver and Mrs. Hume's Pheasant, Chinese Egret, the huge Great and Wreathed Hornbills, beautiful Silver-breasted and Long-tailed Broadbill, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Giant Nuthatch, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Spot-breasted Parrotbill – and many, many more!*

## *Itinerary & Map*

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| **Day 1** | **Arrival in Bangkok** |
| **Day 2** | **Bangkok to Kaeng Krachan via Phetchaburi** |
| **Days 3 to 5** | **Kaeng Krachan National Park** |
| **Day 6** | **Kaeng Krachan National Park to Khao Yai National Park** |
| **Days 7 & 8** | **Khao Yai National Park** |
| **Day 9** | **Khao Yai to Bangkok, flight to Chiang Mai** |
| **Day 10** | **Chiang Mai to Fang via Huai Hong Khrai** |
| **Days 11 & 12** | **Doi Lang** |
| **Day 13** | **Doi Ang Khang** |
| **Day 14** | **Fang to Chiang Mai, flight to Bangkok & depart** |



## *Birding sites in detail*



**Spoon-billed & Broad-billed Sandpipers and Lesser Sand Plovers by Rob Williams**

**Phetchaburi.** We'll drive south from Bangkok to the Gulf of Thailand in Samut Sakhon province. Time will be spent exploring the mudflats, mangroves, saltpans and shrimp pools in search of the many special shorebirds that winter in this area. Top of the list is the endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper, and we stand an excellent chance of finding this incredible rarity mixed in with the other waders. Several other highly sought-after species can also be found here, such as Asian Dowitcher and Nordmann's Greenshank, which are both becoming increasingly rare and difficult to find throughout their ranges. Greater Sand, Lesser Sand, Pacific Golden and Kentish Plovers, Long-toed, Red-necked and Temminck's Stints, Great Knot, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Broad-billed, Curlew and Terek Sandpipers, Brown-headed Gull, Whiskered, Caspian, Gull-billed, Common and Little Terns, Little and Indian Cormorants plus an abundance of other shorebirds can all be expected during the day. We may also find a few of the area's scarcer but generally annual visitors such as Slender-billed Gull, Red-necked Phalarope and Far Eastern Curlew. Brahminy and Black Kites are often seen hunting over the surrounding area, and we can expect our first introduction to many of Asia's widespread species such as Red Turtle, Spotted and Zebra Doves, Black Drongo, Siamese Pied Myna and Scaly-breasted Munia. Other noteworthy and eye-catching species that we may see during our time in this bird-rich area include the beautiful Black-capped and Collared Kingfishers, Racket-tailed Treepie and Malaysian Pied Fantail.

**Laem Phak Bia.** Here we will do a short boat trip to a sand bar that is a particularly good site for the increasingly scarce Malaysian Plover. This spot is also a decent location to look for the rare Chinese Egret and the recently elevated White-faced Plover. Greater Crested and sometimes even Lesser Crested Terns are present alongside the myriad of Brown-headed Gulls. We will search carefully through the roost that is usually present, as Pallas's and Slender-billed Gulls have been seen here in the past. Following our boat trip, we will make a short search for Golden-bellied Gerygone and any of the wader specialties that we may still require.



**Black-throated Sunbird by Keith Valentine**

**Kaeng Krachan National Park.** The fantastic national park of Kaeng Krachan, established by the King of Thailand after a visit to the area in 1981, has the richest bird list in Thailand,

exceeding 420 species. It is the largest national park in the country (>3,000 square kilometres) and is situated on the eastern side of the Tenasserim Mountain Range near the Myanmar border. Many of the special birds in Kaeng Krachan are species from the southern portion of Thailand that reach their geographical northern limit here.



**Spectacled Barwing by Rob Williams**

We will spend our time scouring the beautiful, verdant forests that cloak the surrounding hills covering most elevations and every habitat type, from the more open low elevation forest along the entrance road to the bamboo-cladded hills around the very top of the road.

In the higher altitude forest around the hill-tops, we will search for the very special Ratchet-tailed Treepie, an extremely localised and rare species, especially in Thailand, as well as the lovely Red-bearded Bee-eater, rare Yellow-vented Green Pigeon, Little Cuckoo-Dove, Blyth's Shrike-Babbler, Flavescent, Ochraceous, Ashy and Olive Bulbuls, Chestnut-flanked and Hume's White-eyes, Dark-sided, Hill Blue and Verditer Flycatchers, Greater Green Leafbird, Yellow-vented and Plain Flowerpeckers, Black-throated Sunbird and the zippy Streaked Spiderhunter. Mixed species flocks will also be a feature of Kaeng Krachan and working these exciting waves of activity could produce Speckled and White-browed Piculets, Great Iora, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, the bamboo-dwelling Yellow-bellied Warbler, Striated Yuhina, White-browed Scimitar Babbler, Golden, Collared and Spot-necked Babblers, and Brown-cheeked Fulvetta among many other species.



**Black-and-red Broadbills by Keith Valentine**

In the bamboo-dominated mid-elevations we will seek out the vociferous Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, the rare bamboo-specialist Bamboo Woodpecker, Banded Kingfisher, Black-and-yellow, Silver-breasted, Dusky (rare), and Banded Broadbills, the sneaky Rufous-browed Flycatcher, Puff-throated and Rufous-fronted Babblers, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, gorgeous Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker and Pin-striped Tit-Babbler. Driving along the forest track that leads up into the hills in the early morning and late afternoon will undoubtedly be our best opportunity of finding the shy Grey Peacock-Pheasant, Bar-backed Partridge and Kalij Pheasant. The former species is usually particularly shy and tough to see but we will try our best to obtain views of this spectacular Asian mega. If we are very fortunate, we might even connect with some of the reserve's rare residents such as Rusty-naped Pitta or Ferruginous Partridge.

The most productive birding is likely to be along the flat, entrance road that meanders through Kaeng Krachan's



**Hill Blue Flycatcher by David Hoddinott**

lowland forest. The birding here can be superb in the early morning with highlights including Great Slaty, Streak-breasted, Crimson-winged and Rufous Woodpeckers, Greater Yellownape, Common and Greater Flamebacks, sought-after Black-thighed Falconet, Collared and Asian Barred Owlets, the tiny, fast-flying Vernal Hanging Parrot, Thick-billed and Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons, Green-billed Malkoha, Asian Emerald, Violet, Moustached Hawk and Banded Bay Cuckoos, Grey-rumped Treeswift, Blue-bearded and Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, small, noisy flocks of Oriental Pied Hornbills, the uncommon Tickell's Brown Hornbill, immaculate Green-eared, Blue-throated and Blue-eared Barbets, striking Black-and-red Broadbill, Ashy Woodswallow, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, bright red and glossy-black Scarlet Minivet, Black-naped Oriole, Bronzed, Hair-crested and the spectacular Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, noisy but shy and secretive groups of White-crested, Black-throated, Greater Necklaced and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes, Large Scimitar Babbler, the magnificent Sultan Tit, Black-headed, Black-crested, Stripe-throated and Streak-eared Bulbuls, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Sulphur-breasted and Pale-legged Leaf Warblers, melodious White-rumped Shama, Asian Brown, Taiga, Hainan Blue and Chinese Blue Flycatchers, Blue-winged and Orange-bellied Leafbirds, the brilliant Ruby-cheeked, Olive-backed and Crimson Sunbirds, and Yellow-eared Spiderhunter.

We will also have a look at the small, seasonal ponds and pans along this road as these sometimes harbour White-throated and Black-capped Kingfishers, the shy, scarce Black Bittern, Chinese Pond Heron and White-breasted Waterhen, while in the more open areas we will also keep a lookout overhead for soaring raptors that could include Crested Honey Buzzard, Crested Goshawk, Besra and the impressive Mountain Hawk-Eagle. In the evenings we'll try for Collared Scops Owl and Large-tailed and Indian Nightjars around our accommodation.



**Black-headed Woodpecker by David Hoddinott**

Mammal-wise, we may be fortunate to see some of Kaeng Krachan's fantastic species such as Yellow-throated Marten, Banded and Dusky Langurs, Stump-tailed Macaque or White-handed (Lar) Gibbon. These are all generally unobtrusive, but we'll certainly keep our eyes peeled for these lovely mammals.

We'll dedicated time in the now famous hides, allowing for some incredible photography and excellent visuals of some rarely seen species.

**Khao Yai National Park.** We'll be exploring the densely forested hills and riversides of this exceptional reserve. Khao Yai protects one of the largest pristine tracts of tropical

rainforest in Southeast Asia and holds a wide variety of bird and mammal species, including the rarely seen Tiger, Dhole, and Asian Elephant.



**Siamese Fireback by Nigel Redman**

Top of the most wanted list are the elegant Siamese Fireback and Silver Pheasant, while others in the same family include Red Junglefowl and difficult Green-legged Partridge. We will also keep a careful watch for raptors which could include species such as Shikra, Grey-faced Buzzard, Black Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle and Black Baza. Oriental Pied Hornbill, Common Hill Myna, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Thick-billed Green Pigeon and the dazzling Asian Fairy-bluebird regularly visit fruiting trees, and this is also where we'll have a chance of the seeing the rare, nomadic and superb Golden-crested Myna. Mixed flocks attract species such as Greater Flameback, Black-headed, Grey-eyed, Stripe-throated and Puff-throated Bulbuls, White-bellied Erpornis, Pin-striped Tit-Babbler, Great Iora, Swinhoe's Minivet, Large Woodshrike, Sulphur-breasted and Claudia's Leaf Warblers, and the vibrant Sultan Tit.

The undergrowth in this fantastic park also provides shelter for several skulking species, including Blue and Eared Pittas and the elusive Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo. We will try our best to find these beautiful and much-wanted rarities, but we will require a fair dose of luck, perseverance, and patience to see them. Other forest interior skulkers and undergrowth inhabitants that we will be on the lookout for include the secretive Orange-headed and Siberian Thrushes, Common Green Magpie, Black-throated and charismatic White-crested Laughingthrushes, Hainan Blue and Mugimaki Flycatchers, Abbott's, Puff-throated and Rufous-capped Babblers, and Siberian Blue Robin. Additional star birds include Barred Cuckoo-Dove, incredible Great, Wreathed and Austen's Brown Hornbills, Laced, Heart-spotted and Black-and-buff Woodpeckers, Orange-breasted and Red-headed Trogons, beautiful Long-tailed Broadbill, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, White-throated Rock Thrush, Alström's Warbler and Olive-backed, Black-throated and Ruby-cheeked Sunbirds – to name but a few. Great Eared Nightjar, Collared Scops Owl and Brown Boobook are possible nocturnal highlights, while mammals that occur include Northern Pig-tailed Macaque, vociferous Lar and the scarce Pileated Gibbons, Black Giant, Grey-bellied and Variable Squirrels, Sambar Deer and Northern Red Muntjac.



**Great Hornbill by Glen Valentine**

**Bangkok.** Near to Bangkok, we will make a short stop at a Wat (temple) to search for the localised Rufous Limestone Babbler.

**Huai Hong Khrai.** Huai Hong Khrai is host to one of the world's most spectacular birds - the beautiful Green Peafowl. We will spend some time searching for this incredible bird and may also find a few other species such as Black Baza, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Common Flameback, Red Junglefowl, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, the uncommon Rosy Minivet, Golden-fronted Leafbird and Eurasian Jay.

**Chiang Dao Temple**. Situated in beautiful forest at the base of the imposing mountain of Doi Chiang Dao. The walk up to the temple can be quite productive for birding, and some good species including Streaked Wren-Babbler, Bay Woodpecker, Striated Yuhina, Purple-naped Sunbird, White-crowned Forktail and Pin-tailed Green Pigeon may be found.



**Giant Nuthatch by Forrest Rowland**

**Doi Lang.** We will have an early departure as we strike out for the fabulous birding site of Doi Lang. The mountains here form a border with Myanmar and today we will have numerous views into this beautiful country. Our prime target for the early part of the morning is the rare and much desired Mrs Hume's Pheasant. One of the roads that lead towards the summit of Doi Lang passes through an excellent stretch of this species' preferred habitat and we stand a fair chance of finding this incredible pheasant. While searching for this bird, we also have good chances of finding Mountain Bamboo Partridge (another sought-after speciality) feeding at the roadside.

We will bird this zone for the very special Giant Nuthatch, while other targets include Spot-breasted Parrotbill, Grey Treepie, Rufous-fronted and Yellow-eyed Babblers, Aberrant Bush and the recently described Claudia's Leaf Warbler, Hill Prinia, White-bellied Redstart, Lesser Shortwing, Crested Finchbill, White-gorgeted, Slaty-blue, Ultramarine, Sapphire (rare) and Pale Blue Flycatchers, Cook's Swift, Slender-billed and Maroon Orioles, White-browed Laughingthrush, Siberian Rubythroat, Little, Crested and Chestnut Buntings, and Common Rosefinch.



**Green Peafowl by Nigel Redman**

On another day, we head up to the mid and high-elevation forests. These areas hold a superb variety of birds including the vivid Scarlet-faced Liocichla. Other species occurring in this zone are Oriental Turtle Dove, pocket-sized Collared Owlet, Blue Whistling Thrush, Bay and Crimson-breasted Woodpeckers, Grey-backed Shrike, Black-throated Bushtit, Black-eared Shrike-Babbler, Long-tailed Sibia, Slaty-backed and Rufous-gorgeted Flycatchers, Buff-throated Warbler, Black-throated Sunbird and Large and Small Niltavas. Several rare species for Thailand have also

been found on this mountain, and possibilities include Rusty-naped Pitta, Red-tailed and Spot-breasted Laughingthrushes, Spot-winged Starling, Fire-tailed Sunbird, Grey-cheeked Warbler, Himalayan Cutia and Scarlet Finch.



**Large Niltava by Keith Valentine**

Access to the highest reaches of Doi Lang has recently become an issue with the military taking strict control of the area. There are other roads up Doi Lang that, if passable, can provide access to some slightly different habitat. Predicting access to the high elevation is almost impossible and we will have to see what the military's stance is on arrival. High-elevation species that are only likely to be found if accessing this zone include Whiskered Yuhina, Red-flanked and Himalayan Bluetails and Chestnut-headed Tesia, while Red-billed and Coral-billed Scimitar Babblers are only possible if access via the alternative road to the top is possible.

**Doi Ang Khang.** The spectacular area of Doi Ang Khang, a rugged and scenic mountain that forms the border between Thailand and Myanmar. The Thai government has established watershed protection and upland agricultural projects here to conserve the remaining forest patches and these areas are particularly productive for birding.

The area is famous for holding many great species, including the seldom seen Spot-breasted and Pale-billed Parrotbills, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, Daurian Redstart, Crested, Chestnut and Little Buntings, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Crested Finchbill, Rusty-cheeked and White-browed Scimitar Babblers, Mountain Tailorbird, Yellow-streaked Warbler, Russet Bush Warbler, Pied and Grey Bush Chats, White-browed and Speckled Piculets, Long-tailed Minivet, Bianchi's and Martens's Warblers, shy White-necked Laughingthrush, Spot-throated Babbler, White-gorgeted Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Japanese White-eye, Olive-backed Pipit and Striated Yuhina, amongst many others.



**Spot-breasted Parrotbill by Forrest Rowland**

Time permitting, we'll also visit the area's King's Project, which can be a particularly productive site for finding thrushes such as Black-breasted, Scaly, Eyebrowed and Grey-sided. The King's Project is also a good area for Hill Blue Flycatcher, stunning Rufous-bellied Niltava, White-tailed Robin, Plain Flowerpecker, Maroon Oriole and Spot-winged Grosbeak. With luck we may also encounter a day-roosting Hodgson's Frogmouth, a species that resides in these mountains. Giant Nuthatch and the remarkable Mrs Hume's Pheasant also inhabit this mountain, though we will require a very healthy dose of luck to see these rare species at this site.

## *Tour Grading & Key*

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| **Overall Ease** |  | Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels. |
| **Birding Ease** |  | Moderate. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions but get trickier within forested environments. |
| **Accommodation** |  | Comfortable. |
| **Walking / Trails** |  | Fair amount of walking, mostly on roads and tracks. Some optional trails which can be slippery, muddy, or rocky. (Walking sticks can be helpful). |
| **Vehicles / Roads** |  | Mostly good quality roads in a comfortable vehicle. Some long drives. |
| **Photography** |  | Good to excellent, depending on habitat. Dedicated hide at Kaeng Krachan. |
| **Annoyances** |  | Leeches are sometime present. |

## *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 14;
- 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.**

- Some of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover some long distances to reach 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 for check-in luggage and 8kg for hand luggage.
- Leeches do occur in some of the reserves but encountering them really depends on how much recent rain there has been. If you do have leech socks, it will be useful to bring them along; otherwise, tucking your long pants into your socks is usually sufficient to deter them from latching on. However, leeches are seldom an issue on this tour, given the time of year we visit.

## *Arrival and Departure Details*

The tour starts with an arrival day in Bangkok, and you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude at Bangkok International Airport after lunch on day 14.

As both tours end after an internal flight on the final day, it is recommended that you book your international flights to depart no earlier than the early evening.

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.

Bangkok International Airport, Bangkok (IATA: BKK) is the main port of entry and departure for international flights into Thailand and is well serviced by many of the world's 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.**