Bangladesh

Masked Finfoot and Cachar Bulbul expedition



Masked Finfoot by Nigel Redman

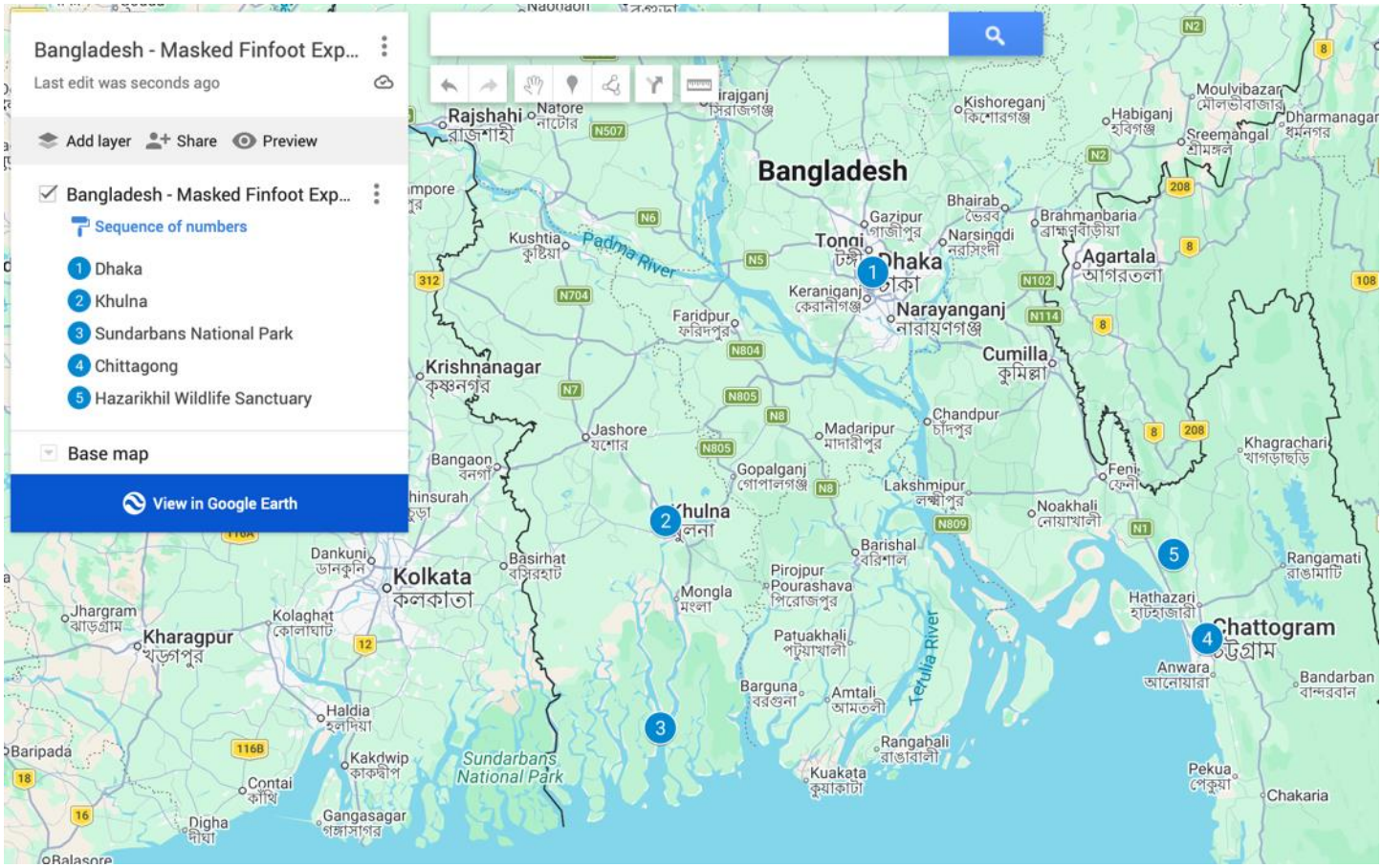
From the forested hills of eastern Bangladesh to the vast tidal wilderness of the Sundarbans, this compact yet highly rewarding tour explores some of the country's finest and most atmospheric birding habitats. Dense tropical forests, quiet rivers, sprawling wetlands and an immense maze of mangrove-lined waterways provide refuge for a superb selection of South Asian specialities, including several species that are difficult to see anywhere else.

Foremost among our targets is the Critically Endangered Masked Finfoot, one of Asia's rarest and most enigmatic birds, for which the Bangladeshi Sundarbans remain the world's most important stronghold. Other mouth-watering possibilities include the elusive White-eared Night Heron, magnificent Brown-winged Kingfisher, Mangrove Pitta, Buffy Fish Owl, range-restricted Cachar Bulbul, secretive White-cheeked Partridge, Blue-naped Pitta, Red-headed Trogon and Great Slaty Woodpecker, alongside a colourful supporting cast of hornbills, barbets, woodpeckers, pittas, babblers and kingfishers.

Our time aboard a comfortable houseboat in the Sundarbans adds an adventurous dimension to the tour as we explore narrow creeks and tidal channels by small boat in search of birds and other wildlife. Ganges River and Irrawaddy Dolphins, Asian Small-clawed Otter, Leopard Cat and Fishing Cat are all possible, while the ever-present chance, however remote, of encountering a Bengal Tiger adds further excitement. Join us for a fascinating birding journey through one of South Asia's most underrated and rewarding destinations.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Dhaka and overnight**
Day 2	**Dhaka to Khulna, and board houseboat**
Days 3 to 6	**Explore the Sundarbans**
Day 7	**Khulna to Dhaka**
Day 8	**Dhaka to Chittagong and the Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary**
Day 9	**Explore the Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary**
Day 10	**Chittagong to Dhaka for final departures**



Birding sites in detail

The Sundarbans. The vast Sundarbans form the largest contiguous mangrove forest in the world, a remarkable wilderness of broad tidal rivers, narrow creeks, mudbanks and dense mangrove forest. At Khulna, we'll board our comfortable houseboat and spend several days exploring this immense wetland, using smaller boats to quietly work the narrower waterways where much of the best birding and wildlife viewing takes place.



White-eared Night Heron by Glen Valentine

Our most important target here is the Critically Endangered Masked Finfoot, one of Asia's rarest and most enigmatic birds. This extraordinary species was formerly distributed much more widely through South and Southeast Asia but has undergone a dramatic decline and disappeared from much of its former range. The Bangladeshi Sundarbans now hold the largest known remaining breeding population and are considered the species' most important global stronghold. Masked Finfoot is a secretive inhabitant of quiet, forest-lined waterways, often keeping close to overhanging vegetation and tangled mangrove margins, and we'll spend plenty of time slowly exploring suitable creeks in hopes of watching one emerge to swim or feed along the exposed muddy banks. Finding this remarkable bird would undoubtedly rank among the major highlights of our time in Bangladesh.

Other exceptional birds we'll be hoping to find include the scarce White-eared Night Heron, which has only relatively recently been discovered wintering in small numbers in the Sundarbans, Buffy Fish Owl, the impressive Brown-winged Kingfisher, Mangrove Pitta and Mangrove Whistler.



Mangrove Pitta by David Hoddinott

A good variety of other waterbirds, raptors and mangrove specialities occur throughout the area and possibilities include Greater Coucal, Green-billed Malkoha, White-breasted Waterhen, Asian Openbill, Black-crowned Night Heron, Striated Heron, Western Osprey, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle and Ruddy, White-throated, Black-capped, Collared and Common Kingfishers. Shorebirds along the exposed banks may include Greater Sand Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Common Sandpiper and Little Stint.

The Sundarbans also offers some excellent mammal possibilities. Ganges River and Irrawaddy Dolphins are regularly encountered in the larger waterways, while Rhesus Macaque, Asian Small-clawed Otter, Small Indian Mongoose, Jungle Cat and Mainland Leopard Cat are all possible. Fishing Cat would be an exceptional bonus. Bengal Tiger still occurs throughout the Sundarbans, although we would require a considerable dose of luck to encounter this famously elusive predator!



Ruddy Kingfisher by Reece Dodd

Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary.Situated amongst the forested hills north of Chattogram, Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary protects a varied mixture of tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forest, bamboo, dense secondary growth and small forest streams. We'll spend our time exploring the sanctuary's trails and quieter forest edges, searching both the canopy and thick understorey for a fine selection of eastern Bangladesh's forest birds.

One of our principal targets will be the range-restricted Cachar Bulbul, while the secretive White-cheeked Partridge is another particularly desirable species that occurs here. The dense forest floor also supports Grey Peacock-Pheasant and Blue-naped Pitta, both of which can prove decidedly difficult to see, while other exciting possibilities include the beautiful Red-headed Trogon, Great Slaty Woodpecker, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Grey-headed and Rufous Woodpeckers, Greater Flameback, Blue-bearded and Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, Blue-throated and Lineated Barbets, Oriental Pied Hornbill and Crested Serpent Eagle.

The sanctuary supports a particularly good variety of bulbuls, babblers and other forest passerines and we'll be on the lookout for Ashy, Black-headed, Black-crested and White-throated Bulbuls, Puff-throated, Abbott's and Buff-breasted Babblers, Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, Greater Racket-tailed and Bronzed Drongos, Black-naped Monarch, White-rumped Shama, Common Hill Myna, Golden-fronted and Blue-winged Leafbirds, Ruby-cheeked and Crimson Sunbirds and Streaked Spiderhunter. Winter visitors may include Yellow-browed, Greenish and Yellow-vented Warblers, together with Verditer, Blue-throated Blue and Taiga Flycatchers and, with luck, some of the scarcer wintering thrushes and robins.



Grey Peacock-pheasant by Daniel Danckwerts

Mammals are generally much less conspicuous than the birds, but Rhesus Macaque and Capped Langur are possible, while the forest also retains a much more elusive assemblage of mammals. Any encounter with one of the sanctuary's shyer forest residents would be an unexpected bonus.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate to comfortable. Suitable for most birding and wildlife interest levels. Bangladesh can be busy and chaotic in the larger towns and cities, but the pace becomes considerably more relaxed once we reach the forest reserves and Sundarbans.
Birding Ease		Moderate. A mixture of forest, forest edge, wetlands and mangrove waterways. Some forest species can be secretive and difficult to see, while much of the Sundarbans birding is done from small boats along creeks and river channels.
Accommodation		Good to comfortable. Hotels are generally of a good local standard. In the Sundarbans we spend several nights aboard a comfortable houseboat with private cabins and onboard facilities.
Walking / Trails		Mostly easy to moderate. Forest birding involves short to moderate walks on trails that may occasionally be narrow, uneven or muddy. Very little walking is required in the Sundarbans, where most birding is undertaken from the houseboat and smaller excursion boats.
Vehicles / Roads		Road quality varies from good to average, with some slower sections and occasional traffic congestion around larger towns and cities. There are several longer drives between birding areas. Vehicles are manufactured to local requirements and can feel somewhat smaller than equivalent Western vehicles.
Photography		Worthwhile to very good. The Sundarbans in particular offers excellent opportunities for bird and wildlife photography from the boats, although many forest species can be difficult to photograph in dense vegetation. No dedicated photographic hides are used.
Annoyances		Traffic and congestion can be significant around Dhaka and other urban areas, while travel times can occasionally be unpredictable. Food is often spicy, although milder options are usually available. Mosquitoes and other biting insects may be present, and forest trails can be muddy after rain. Some early morning boat excursions can also be cool.

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 10;
- 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;
- Camera fees;
- 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.

Please note that single cabins aboard the Sundarbans houseboat are limited and subject to availability. We therefore cannot guarantee single accommodation on the houseboat for all participants who may request it, even where a single supplement has been selected. Where necessary, participants may be required to share a cabin for the houseboat portion of the tour.







Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**

- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- This tour does require a moderate level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as most of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Accommodation throughout the tour is comfortable. There is no camping on this trip.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins in Dhaka on day 1, with arrival and overnight accommodation in the city. The tour concludes in Dhaka on day 10 following our return flight from Chittagong, with final departures from Hazrat Shahjalal International 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.

Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (IATA: DAC), Dhaka is the primary international point of entry and departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

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