India - Southern

Andaman & Nicobar Island Endemics

18th March to 1st April 2028 (15 days)



Nicobar Pigeon by Daniel Danckwerts

This exciting 15-day Andaman & Nicobar birding adventure has been specially designed for the Oriental Bird Club, offering a rare opportunity to explore one of India's most remote and endemic-rich island groups. Beginning in Port Blair on South Andaman, the tour targets a superb suite of Andaman endemics and regional specialities in forest, wetland, mangrove and nocturnal habitats. Early highlights may include Andaman Teal, Andaman Green Pigeon, Andaman Wood-Pigeon, Andaman Shama, Andaman Drongo, Andaman Woodpecker, Andaman Bulbul and the elusive Andaman Crake, while night birding could produce Hume's Boobook, Andaman Boobook, Andaman Scops-Owl, Andaman Nightjar and the highly prized Andaman Masked-Owl.

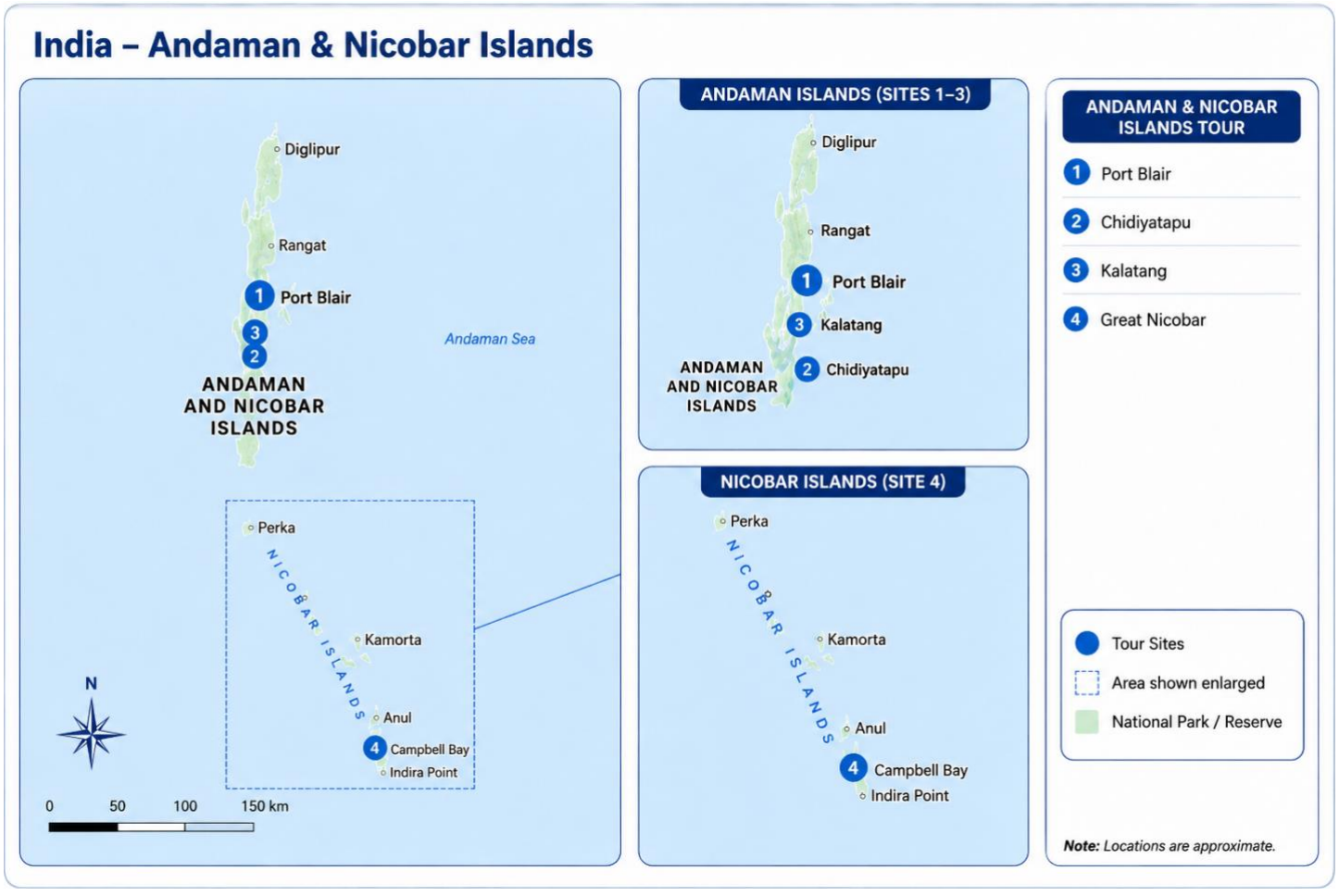
A major feature of the tour is the voyage south to Great Nicobar, with opportunities for pelagic species such as Flesh-footed Shearwater, Bridled Tern and both Great and Lesser Crested Terns. From the ship, we will also scan Kamorta for the much-wanted Nicobar Bulbul.

Seven full days on Great Nicobar give us time to search for some of the region's most sought-after birds, including Nicobar Serpent-Eagle, Nicobar Jungle Flycatcher, Nicobar Imperial-Pigeon, Nicobar Parakeet, Nicobar Hooded Pitta and the notoriously difficult Nicobar Megapode. Other possible highlights include Nicobar Pigeon, Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher, Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher and the endemic Nicobar Scops-Owl, with a dedicated effort to find the mysterious, undescribed "Nicobar Crake."

Remote, adventurous and rich in island endemism, this promises to be a truly memorable expedition.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Port Blair**
Days 2 & 3	**Kalantang Village and Chidiyatapu**
Day 4 & 5	**36-hr voyage from Port Blair to Great Nicobar Island**
Day 6 – 12	**Birding on Great Nicobar Island**
Day 13 & 14	**36-hr voyage Great Nicobar Island to Port Blair**
Day 15	**Final departure from Port Blair**



Birding sites in detail



Andaman Woodpecker by David Hoddinott

Port Blair & Sippighat area. Port Blair, the capital city of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is Located at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, these two island groups are politically part of India. Possibly formed due to the subduction of the Indian tectonic plate below the South-east Asian Plate, the islands at one point may have provided a contiguous land route between Myanmar and Indonesia.

They are host to a veritable treasure trove of endemic wildlife, with most having stronger affinities with the Malaysian sub-region than that of the Indian sub-continent. One of the islands is also home to the Sentinelese (the only known surviving Palaeolithic people). Despite several contact attempts in the 20th century, the locals have reacted only with hostility. As such, they have had very little contact with outsiders. From what is known by distant observation, the Sentinelese maintain a hunter-gatherer existence, with no evidence of agricultural practices or even the use of fire.

Much of the Andamans are still covered in pristine forest and we will concentrate much of our time inside the forests during our time here. We will also make excursions to the mudflats and mangroves for waders and other coastal species.

The coastal mudflats are of interest for many wader species. Birding the flats will no doubt cause some interest from the local people who are always keen to find out just what it is that we are so interested in. While explaining the finer aspects of birdwatching, we will pan through the commoner waders looking for such interesting species as Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Terek Sandpiper, Great Knot, Little Tern and possibly White-bellied Sea Eagle overhead. Moving to mangrove margins should elicit Mangrove Whistler, Collared Kingfisher and Watercock, while we also stand good chances of finding Andaman Teal, Cinnamon, and Yellow Bitterns, Dusky, Clamorous Reed, Blyth's Reed, Black-browed and Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers, and possibly Ruddy-breasted Crake or Slaty-breasted Rail. Commoner species along the littoral zone include the recently split Grey-headed Swamphen, Chinese Pond Heron, Pacific Golden Plover, Long-toed Stint and Stork-billed Kingfisher.



Andaman Crake by David Hoddinott

Night birding here is a must, with a bevy of endemic species that include Andaman Masked Owl, Andaman Scops Owl, Hume's and Andaman Hawk-Owl, Andaman Nightjar as well as the *modestus* sub-species of Oriental Scops Owl, which is liable to be split in the future as Walden's Scops Owl.



Andaman Bulbul by David Hoddinott

Mount Harriet. Mount Harriet generally produces several mixed species flocks containing Andaman and Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, White-headed Starling, Andaman Treepie, Freckle-breasted Woodpecker, the eye-searing Scarlet Minivet, Andaman Flowerpecker, Black-naped Monarch, and Andaman Cuckooshrike.

Alarm calls may give away the location of the highly attractive Violet Cuckoo or rare Andaman Serpent Eagle. We must also pay very close attention to disturbances in the leaf litter where Forest Wagtail is common, and both the cryptic Orange-headed Thrush and the mega Andaman Crake are also known to occur. We will also spend some late afternoons here trying to catch sight of two of the more difficult denizens; Andaman Cuckoo-Dove and Andaman Wood Pigeon as they return to their roost sites.

Chidiyatapu. The forest patches around Chidiyatapu provide steady forest birding, and perhaps our only chance to find the elusive and rarely seen Andaman Crake – though this would be considered a major bonus should we be so lucky. Aside from the near-mythical crake, we will see many of the commoner endemics here with Andaman Coucal and Andaman Woodpecker being particularly evident. *Psittacids* are well represented with Vernal Hanging Parrot rather commonly seen alongside three species of *Psittacula* parakeets: Alexandrine, Red-breasted and Long-tailed. Andaman Shama, Andaman Bulbul, and White-headed Starling make up the remaining endemics in this forest. We will also be keeping a keen eye overhead for Edible-nest and White-bellied Swiftlets and the much larger Brown Needletail.

Voyage to Great Nicobar. Voyage to Great Nicobar. The sea crossing from Port Blair to Great Nicobar is a key part of the adventure, taking us deep into the Andaman Sea on the weekly inter-island vessel. While the roughly 36-hour journey is primarily a travel leg, it also provides occasional opportunities for pelagic birding and cetacean watching from the ship's deck. We will keep watch for a range of Bay of Bengal seabirds, including Wedge-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Sooty, Bridled, Black-naped, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Little, Sandwich, Caspian and Roseate Terns, Brown Noddy, Masked Booby, Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds, Lesser Frigatebird, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Jouanin's and Barau's Petrels, Streaked Shearwater, and Pomarine Skua. The crossing may also produce cetaceans, with possibilities including Spinner, Striped, Pantropical Spotted and Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins, as well as Dwarf Sperm Whale, Pygmy Sperm Whale and Short-finned Pilot Whale.



Lesser Frigatebird by Daniel Danckwerts



Nicobar Parakeet by Shaktivel

A brief stop at Kamorta Harbour offers a particularly exciting opportunity, as we will search from the vessel for the highly sought-after Nicobar Bulbul in the surrounding coastal canopy. Although we cannot disembark here, careful scanning may also produce the local resident form of Pied Triller. This voyage adds a genuine expedition feel to the tour and serves as our gateway to one of the most remote and rarely birded corners of India.

Great Nicobar. Great Nicobar is the undoubted centrepiece of the tour, offering several days of birding in remote island forest where many of the region's most prized specialities occur. Our time here will be spent working forest roads, trails and suitable clearings in search of a remarkable suite of endemics, including Nicobar Serpent-Eagle, Nicobar Jungle Flycatcher, Nicobar Imperial-Pigeon, Nicobar Parakeet, Nicobar Hooded Pitta and the notoriously difficult Nicobar Megapode. We will also make a special effort to locate the endemic Nicobar Scops-Owl after dark, along with the distinctive local form of Brown Boobook. Other possibilities include Nicobar Pigeon, Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher, Black-naped Oriole, Jerdon's Baza, Long-tailed Parakeet, Ornate and Crimson Sunbirds, and several superb kingfishers, including Collared, Stork-billed and Black-backed Dwarf Kingfishers. Perhaps most tantalising of all is the chance to search for the mysterious, undescribed "Nicobar Crake," a true prize should we be fortunate enough to encounter it.

Remote logistics, basic infrastructure on Great Nicobar, limited food options, patchy internet, variable ship conditions, possible delays due to weather or sailing schedules, basic or shared facilities on the vessel if cabin class is unavailable, heat and humidity, mosquitoes and other biting insects. Medical facilities on Great Nicobar are basic, and the tour is not recommended for travellers with significant medical concerns.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Comfortable. Suitable for keen birders with a sense of adventure and some tolerance for remote travel conditions.
Birding Ease		Moderate. Mostly forest, forest edge, wetlands, and some open coastal areas. Many key endemics and localized island specialties require repeated effort, early starts, and occasional night birding.
Accommodation		Comfortable in Port Blair. Basic on Great Nicobar. Lodging on Great Nicobar is limited, with simple rooms or homestay-style accommodation and fewer amenities. Accommodation on the inter-island vessel is functional and varies by ship; we will try to secure cabin class with ensuite facilities, but this is subject to availability.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks, several slopes. Some trails are narrow & may be muddy.

Vehicles / Roads		Generally acceptable around Port Blair, but more limited and basic on Great Nicobar. Some travel is by vehicle ferry and there is a long inter-island ship journey of roughly 36 hours each way. Sea conditions during the crossings can vary and may be rough at times, so travellers prone to seasickness should come prepared.
Photography		Worthwhile to good. No dedicated hides.
Annoyances		Spicy food, strong smells of various types. Remote logistics, basic infrastructure on Great Nicobar, limited food options, patchy internet, variable ship conditions, possible delays due to weather or sailing schedules, basic or shared facilities on the vessel if cabin class is unavailable, heat and humidity, mosquitoes and other biting insects. Medical facilities on Great Nicobar are basic, and the tour is not recommended for travellers with significant medical concerns.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

The price for this 15-day Tailor-made tour of Indian (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) is broken down as follows:

INR725,995.00 (roughly US$7,670.00) for each of **three guests** on a twin/sharing basis throughout;

INR635,995.00 (roughly US$6,720.00) for each of **four guests** on a twin/sharing basis throughout;

Single supplement: INR33,000.00 (roughly US$350.00)

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 15;
- All lodgings during the tours;
- 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.

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.
- Fitness: The Andaman & Nicobar tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health and reasonably fit, as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Some trails may be narrow, uneven, muddy or slippery, particularly after rain, and occasional night birding will also be undertaken.
- Accommodation in Port Blair is comfortable; however, facilities on Great Nicobar are considerably more basic. Lodging there is limited and may consist of simple rooms or homestay-style accommodation, with fewer amenities and limited food options. Single rooms on Great Nicobar are subject to availability and cannot always be guaranteed.
- The tour includes long inter-island sea crossings between Port Blair and Great Nicobar, each taking approximately 36 hours. Sea conditions can vary and may be rough at times, so participants prone to seasickness should bring suitable medication and be prepared for changing conditions.
- **Accommodation on the inter-island vessel is functional and varies depending on the ship assigned to the sailing. We will make every effort to secure cabin class accommodation, preferably with ensuite facilities, but this is subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed. If cabin class is unavailable, facilities may be more basic and/or shared.**
- Great Nicobar is remote, with basic infrastructure, patchy internet and limited medical facilities. This tour is therefore not recommended for travelers with significant medical concerns or those uncomfortable with remote travel logistics.
- **Comprehensive travel insurance is mandatory for all participants on this tour. This should include adequate cover for medical emergencies, evacuation, trip cancellation or interruption, delays, lost luggage and any disruption arising from weather, shipping schedules or remote-area logistics.**

Arrival and Departure Details

The Andaman and Nicobar will depart from Port Blair on day 1 and conclude in Port Blair after breakfast on day 15.

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.

Veer Savarkar International Airport, Port Blair (IATA: IXZ) is the main port of entry and departure and is most easily reached via Chennai International Airport (IATA: MAA).

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.