

The Birds of China's Yellow Sea Coast

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Arrive Shanghai, transfer Nanhui.
Day 3	Juilongshan.
Day 4	Qingdao.
Day 5/6	Lianyungang.
Day 7/12	Rudong.
Day 13	Greater Yangshan Island.
Day 14/15	Nanhui, Shanghai
Day 16	Fly London.

Departs
October.

Dates & Prices

See website (tour code CHN09).

Grading

Grade A – Easy day walks only.

Focus

Birds.

Highlights:

- Look for the critically-endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- Waders including Great Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint & Nordmann's Greenshank
- East Asian migrants such as Siberian Rubythroat, Meadow Bunting & Rufous-tailed Robin
- Siberian, White's, Eye-browed and Dusky Thrushes
- Look for White-throated Needletail & migrating Grey-faced Buzzards in Jiulongshan National Forest Park
- Look for Chinese Crested Tern, Asia's rarest seabird!
- One night on 'migrant trap' of Greater Yangshan Island
- Led by expert Naturetrek naturalist & local guides



From the top: Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Siberian Rubythroat & White's Thrush



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Introduction

China’s Yellow Sea coast sits beneath one of the world’s great migration flyways. The mudflats and wetlands that edge the coastline here are of vital importance for the survival of 17 globally-threatened migratory waders, including the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. This exciting tour will include a visit to the key site for this charismatic and sought-after little shorebird, guided by the very person responsible for identifying the area’s importance for this species! ‘Spoonies’ aside, the mudflats of the Yellow Sea also provide food and rest for nearly 40 species of wader, including Great Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Nordmann’s Greenshank! It is not just the waders that will feature, however, for the region’s varied habitats often shelter large numbers of migrant passerines too in October, including Siberian and White’s Thrushes, Siberian Rubythroat, Mugimaki Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Robin and Pallas’s Reed Bunting.

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart London

We depart London Heathrow’s Airport on board a Virgin Atlantic direct overnight flight to Shanghai.

Day 2

Arrive Shanghai, transfer Nanhui



Red-flanked Bluetail

We are due to arrive into Shanghai Airport mid-morning where we will meet our local guide and transfer to Nanhui, a journey of around 30 minutes (depending on traffic) to the south. Here the mighty Yangtze River empties into the East China Sea depositing its sediments and creating extensive intertidal mudflats which stretch along the coastline south into Hangzhou Bay. The mudflats and adjacent farmland here offer exciting birding in October. It is a particularly good area for passerines which may include Rufous-tailed Robin and Siberian

Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail and a mouth-watering selection of thrushes such as Siberian, White’s, Grey-backed, Eye-browed and both Dusky & Naumann’s. Radde’s, Dusky, Yellow-browed, Pallas’s, Eastern Crowned, Arctic and Sakhalin Leaf Warblers are all possible, whilst Mugimaki Flycatcher and Asian Brown Flycatcher are often seen too.

We will also search farmlands and reedbeds for Yellow-breasted Bunting, a bird that has suffered a massive decline in recent years, but one that is seen here with some regularity, especially in early October which is peak time for this species. In the same habitats we will also look for Pechora, Red-throated, Richard’s and maybe Olive-backed

Pipits. Both Oriental Scops Owl and Northern Boobok can be seen roosting in the area, and if our guide knows of a reliable one during our visit we will be sure to take a look. We will overnight in a comfortable hotel in Nanhui.

Day 3

Jiulongshan

This morning after breakfast we drive a little further south-west along the coast to Jiulongshan. Here we will focus our efforts on Jiulongshan National Forest Park which overlooks Hangzhou Bay and was once a royal park during the Qing Dynasty. Raptors heading south in the autumn reach the Yangtse River Delta and then follow the coastline of Hangzhou Bay past Jiulongshan before crossing the bay a little way further to the south. Jiulongshan National Forest Park is the first hill they meet as they track along the coastline here and they use it to gain height. It will also give us a more elevated

position in which to watch the birds pass. The numbers of birds passing will depend on the weather, but if conditions are kind we may be treated to numerous Eurasian Hobbies, Japanese Sparrowhawks, Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzards drifting past, plus a few other species such as Amur Falcon, Chinese Sparrowhawk and Osprey. Grey-faced Buzzard often migrate in their hundreds or even thousands. For example, on 7th October 2019, almost 5,000 were recorded!



Crested Honey Buzzard

We will also explore the habitats around the hill for other migrants and residents such Black-throated Bushitit, Black Bulbul, Speckled Piculet, and White-throated Needletails which are often seen whizzing around the hill top. We will stay in Zhapu Town which is only a few hundred metres from the park.

Day 4

Qingdao



Terek Sandpiper

This morning we will retrace our steps back to Shanghai Airport for a flight of around one and a half hours to the city of Qingdao, which lies on the edge of the Yellow Sea. Qingdao offers easy access to a wide variety of coastal habitats, the most important of which is Jiaozhou Bay, a prime re-fueling stopover for a wide variety of migratory birds as they track south from their Arctic breeding grounds to their wintering quarters.

In the 1930's more than 30 Chinese Crested Terns were collected from an island near Qingdao before the species disappeared and was thought to have gone extinct. In 2000, however, it was rediscovered on Matsu Island to the south and since then there have been a series of records in Qingdao most autumns. In 2019, as usual, small numbers were recorded in late September, but then in early October local birders relocated them to a new site nearby and counted a total of 37 birds. We will keep our fingers crossed that they – Asia's rarest seabird – will continue to return in future years!

Day 5 – 6

Lianyungang

It will take around four hours to drive south from Qingdao to our next base in Lianyungang where we stay for two nights. Lianyungang is one of the most important resting and feeding sites for Asian Dowitcher. In August and September there can be several thousand birds here and it is likely that there will be a few lingerers at the time of our visit in early October. It's also a reliable site for young Relict Gulls, which often winter here well south of the adults' usual wintering range. Other species to look out for include Nordmann's Greenshank, Far Eastern Curlew, hundreds of Great Knot and thousands of Avocet. Coastal migration sites are as good as the ones in Rudong and Shanghai and regularly turn up an interesting variety of passerines whilst the extensive reedbeds are good for Reed Parrotbill, buntings and *acrocephalus* warblers.



Nordmann's Greenshank

We may also offer a pelagic trip Cheniushan Island which lies around 30 kilometres offshore, but whether it operates will be subject to the number of people interested and the number of people signed up (not just from our group). In addition to post-breeding Streaked Shearwater and Swinhoe's Storm-petrel, the island is often good for migrants. Other seabirds may include Japanese Cormorant and Black-tailed Gull.

Day 7 – 12

Rudong



Dusky Thrush

Moving on, we will drive a further four hours south-east to Rudong, our base for the following six nights of the tour. There are plenty of interesting sites to explore over the coming days and, of course, the great joy of birdwatching in the autumn is that there will be an almost daily turnover of birds. We will stay at Yangkou Fishing Harbour which is only a 30-minute drive from Tiaozini in neighbouring Dongtai County, which was awarded World Heritage Status in July 2019 for its vast intertidal mudflats and the wonderful suite of Asian waders the wetland attracts.

This is a very reliable site for Spoon-billed Sandpiper in October, along with several hundred Nordmann's Greenshank, and plenty of Great Knot, Red-necked Stints, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Terek Sandpipers, Marsh

Sandpipers and many others. We should see also see the rare Black-faced Spoonbill and Oriental Stork and, although numbers build later in the year, we should find the first of the region's wintering Dalmatian Pelicans too.

Shanghai birdwatchers first started exploring the Rudong area at Yangkou, although this site is less exciting these days due to land reclamation and the invasion of cordgrass. It is still an area well worth visiting, however, and regularly hosts Spoon-billed Sandpipers alongside a variety of other commoner wader species. There are also a few excellent migrant hotspots nearby – and near to our hotel too – and we will make regular early morning outings to the best of these in search of what may have dropped in overnight. Amongst a variety of pipits, thrushes and buntings, we will hope for Taiga, Grey-streaked and Narcissus Flycatchers, Bluethroat, Bull-headed, Brown, Chinese Grey and Long-tailed Shrikes and Stejneger's Stonechat. October is peak month for Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail and Rufous-tailed Robin passage and all can be quite numerous after the passing of a cold front. Although Japanese Swamp Warbler can be very skulking after breeding, it is also possible here along with more flamboyant flocks of Azure-winged Magpies. Eastern Marsh, Hen and Pied Harriers are often seen hunting over the fields and wetlands.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper

Day 13

Greater Yangshan Island

After breakfast we drive south through Shanghai and then across the 25-kilometre road bridge that links the mainland to the deep-water port on Lesser Yangshan Island. From there we will take the 15-minute ferry over to Greater Yangshan Island where we will be based for one night.



Blue-and-white Flycatcher

The Yangshan Islands lie to the southeast of Cape Nanhui and, in the right weather conditions, can be hopping with birds. They offer a higher chance than the mainland for certain species such as Japanese Yellow Bunting, along with a wide variety of more regular species. The islands are especially good for buntings including Tristram's, Rustic, Chestnut, Black-faced, Yellow-browed and Little Buntings. Flycatchers and thrushes can also be numerous and may include Mugimaki, Taiga and Blue-and-white of the former and White's, Eye-browed and Siberian of the latter.

Residents here include Large-billed Crow and Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler, whilst there's always the possibility of a few migrating raptors roosting on the island overnight.

Day 14 – 15

Nanhui, Shanghai

We will spend the morning further exploring the island and looking for grounded migrants before taking the ferry back to the Lesser Yangshan Island and driving back across the bridge to the mainland. We will then spend the rest of Day 14 and the whole of Day 15 birdwatching along the coast before spending our final two nights in China in a comfortable hotel in Nanhui, close to the seawall and several key migrant spots.

Day 16

Fly London

We are due to depart Shanghai Airport late-morning on our return direct Virgin Atlantic flight to London's Heathrow Airport arriving later in the afternoon.

Tour Focus & Grading

Grade A – The focus of this tour will be the migrant and resident birdlife of eastern China. Walks will be taken at a leisurely pace over mostly easy terrain, although some of the coastal paths can be wet, slippery and a little rough in places. Early morning starts will be the norm as the first few hours of daylight are the best for finding grounded migrants. The tour is therefore suitable for anyone with an 'average' or greater level of fitness.

Weather

October is a very pleasant month to visit eastern China. The heat of the summer has subsided and the cold weather of winter has yet to kick in. The weather in and around Shanghai in October is often clear and cool. It can, however, also be changeable at times with the bands of rain and wind moving through from time to time. Temperatures tend to be in the mid to high teens centigrade in the middle of the day, slowly falling as the month progresses. You should be prepared for cool conditions on the coast – we will be spending much of our time there – but also bring some lighter clothing in case the weather warms up inland.

Accommodation & Food

All meals are included in the price of this holiday from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 16. Throughout the tour we will be staying in comfortable, tourist-class hotels. All rooms have private facilities. Single occupancy is available at the cost outlined on our website.

Extra expenses

The cost of the holiday does not include drinks, tips, Chinese entry visa (for prices see www.visaforchina.org), locally paid airport taxes and all items of a personal nature.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to China. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

Images under licence from Shutterstock Images Ltd.
