

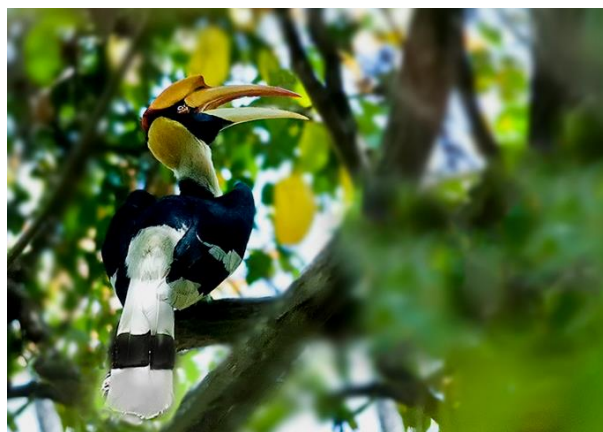
# The Best of India & Nepal

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline Itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Depart London
<b>Day 2</b>	Kathmandu
<b>Day 3/5</b>	Chitwan Tiger Reserve
<b>Day 6/8</b>	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
<b>Day 9/11</b>	Darjeeling
<b>Day 12/15</b>	Kaziranga Tiger Reserve
<b>Day 16</b>	Delhi
<b>Day 17</b>	Return London



From top: Great Hornbill, Indian Rhinoceros & Tiger

### Dates

#### 2020

Fri 13th Nov – Sun 29th Nov 2020      Cost: £4,795

#### 2021

Fri 29th Jan – Sun 14th Feb 2021      Cost: £4,795

Fri 12th Nov – Sun 28th Nov 2021      Cost: £4,795

#### 2022

Fri 28th Jan – Sun 13th Feb 2022      Cost: £4,995

Fri 11th Nov – Sun 27th Nov 2022      Cost: £4,995

### Cost

Cost: from £4,795 (London/London)

£500 reduction if booked without flights, land only trip.  
(Kathmandu/Delhi).



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**Single room supplement**

£995

**Grading**

Grade A. Does not include strenuous walking

**Focus**

Birds and mammals



Tigress and cubs

## Introduction

This 17-day holiday in search of birds and mammals focuses on the finest wildlife sites and sanctuaries of the foothills and floodplains beneath the great Himalaya: the subtropical jungles of Chitwan (National Park and) Tiger Reserve and vast wetlands of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in Nepal, plus a visit to Darjeeling and one of the greatest reserves in India, Kaziranga. A wealth of wildlife amid splendid scenery is guaranteed on this tour along with the opportunity to sample the cultures of two very different neighbouring countries.



Boat excursion on the Narayani River, Chitwan National Park

## Day 1

Friday

### In Flight

We depart this afternoon from London on board a Qatar Airways scheduled flight to Kathmandu, via Doha.

## Day 2

Saturday

### Kathmandu

We will arrive in Kathmandu at 3.25pm and transfer to the 5-star Yak and Yeti Hotel or Shangri-La Hotel, which is our base for the night. This is a splendid hotel, surrounded by mountains and offering wonderful views. It has a gymnasium, swimming pool and gardens and is situated in the heart of Kathmandu, not far from the Royal Palace. There will be a choice of relaxing at the hotel or having a walk near our hotel.



Yak and Yeti hotel

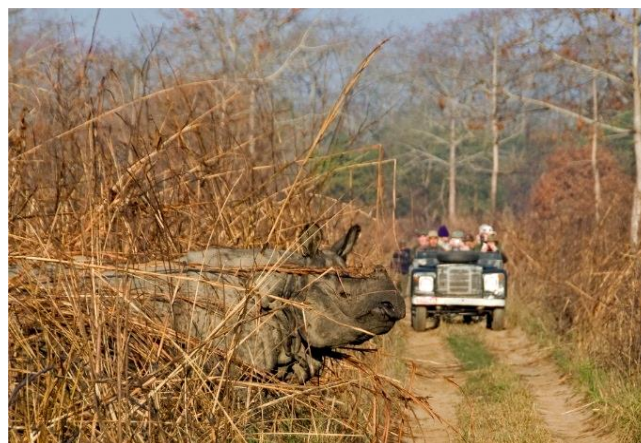


## Day 3

Sunday

### Chitwan Tiger Reserve

This morning we begin the long journey to Chitwan by minibus. On leaving the Kathmandu Valley the road follows the edge of the fast flowing Trisuli River, a fairly reliable site for Ibisbills (an enigmatic wader of the Himalaya) and other riverside and montane species. Birds likely to be found include the beautiful White-capped Redstart, Brown Dipper and, if we are very lucky, one of the wintering Wallcreepers that frequent the road and riverside rock faces. We hope to arrive at the Chitwan Tiger Reserve by mid-afternoon where we will transfer to the Tigerland Jungle Lodge, which has simple but comfortable rooms with en suite facilities. The lodge is situated close to the Rapti River on the outskirts of the Reserve among splendid scenery. Visitors can sit at the lodge with binoculars and watch wildlife inside the Chitwan Tiger Reserve!



Rhino in Chitwan

The Chitwan Tiger Reserve comprises 932 square kilometres of Sal and riverine jungle. It is a magnificent environment with a greater variety of wildlife than any other area of Nepal. Over 500 species of birds have been recorded here and we can expect to see nearly one third of these, as well as many mammals and reptiles. Some of the species we will be hoping to see include the endangered Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, Wild Boar, Sambar, Muntjac, Spotted and Hog Deer, Rhesus and Langur Monkeys; Marsh Mugger and fish-eating Gharial Crocodiles are also a possibility. Leopards, Sloth Bears, and Gaur are occasionally seen! Tigers do occur in the area but are typically very elusive and difficult to see.

## Days 4 – 5

Monday – Tuesday

### Chitwan Tiger Reserve

We will have two full days based in Chitwan Tiger Reserve. Making an early start we will spend the first few hours of daylight exploring the surrounding riverine forest and grassland on elephant back. Most mammals, including the Rhino, ignore this unique and surprisingly quiet mode of travel which is the most productive and enjoyable way to search for the more elusive mammal species. During the rest of the day we will explore the rivers and go birdwatching in the forest on foot. These two days should provide outstanding wildlife viewing.



Gharial Crocodile



## Days 6 – 8

## Wednesday – Friday

### Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Today we will have a long journey on the East-West Highway from Chitwan to the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. Due to annual damage by the monsoon, the highway is under a constant state of repair and tends to be a patchwork of tarmac and rough dirt roads. Although tiring, it is also a fascinating journey. Driving through the ‘terai’ (lowland) regions of Nepal we will pass through a variety of villages and towns, which gives us a glimpse of the Nepalese culture and way of life. We will aim to reach Koshi Camp by late afternoon. This Tented Camp offers simple but comfortable accommodation close to the great Koshi river and will be our base for three nights. Situated at the remote eastern corner of the Reserve, in an area known for its good bird and wildlife, the camp is not far from the Reserve’s headquarters and is also close to several waterholes. Run by experienced naturalists, Koshi Camp consists of 11 large, comfortably furnished ‘walk-in’ luxury tented rooms, with private facilities and a separate dining hall and bar.

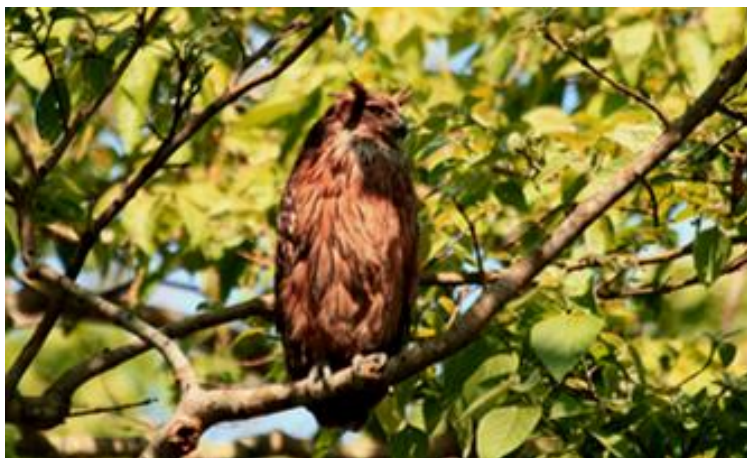
Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve is situated in the Sapta-Kosi River plain in the eastern corner of Nepal, close to the Indian border. The Reserve covers 175 square kilometres to the north of the kilometre-long barrage which spans the Koshi River. This was built between 1958 and 1964 to control and prevent flooding in the plains of northern India to the south. The vast expanse of open water created by the barrage and the marshes, lagoons, sandbanks, mudflats and



Koshi Camp

arable land that lie around it, offer an outstanding wetland habitat and one of the finest birdwatching sites in Asia.

Almost all of Nepal’s long list of wildfowl, waders, storks, ibises, egrets, terns and gulls occur here, plus a great variety of landbirds, especially warblers and birds of prey. Well in excess of 120 species should be seen each day in this wonderful area, among them local specialities such as Swamp Francolin, Red-necked Falcon, and Striated Marsh Warbler. The sharp-eyed among us may also be lucky enough to see some of the endangered Ganges River Dolphins that live here.





The heart of the Reserve lies some 14 kilometres north of the barrage where seasonally inundated grasslands, lagoons, and remnant patches of 'khair' (*Acacia catechu* – a deciduous thorny tree) and 'sissoo' (*Dalbergia sissoo* – Indian rosewood) forest lie alongside the eastern bank of the Koshi River. This region is the last refuge of the wild Water Buffalo in Nepal, and other mammals recorded include Fishing Cat, Jungle Cat, Asiatic Golden Jackal, Spotted Deer, Hog Deer, Nilgai (or 'blue bull' – the subcontinent's largest antelope), and the endangered Ganges River Dolphin.

Our most regular and rewarding wildlife outings will be on foot, exploring the grasslands, river, lagoons and woodland close to the camp and in the vicinity of the barrage, which is a short drive away. We will also take a raft onto the wide waters of the Koshi River to enjoy the birdlife of the otherwise inaccessible sandbanks and islands.

## Day 9

Saturday

### Drive to Darjeeling



Brown Fish Owl



Clockwise from top left: Indian Flying Foxes, Purple Sunbird, Pied Harrier and Jungle Cats

In the early morning we leave Nepal and transfer by road to Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal, north-east India. Darjeeling is a small town which the British tea planters and the Raj used as a summer capital to escape the searing heat of the plains lower down in Kolkata. The season promised frequent tea parties and discussions around polished tables in quaint and beautifully located bungalows where life had its own rhythm. It is still possible to experience this relaxed style of life in Darjeeling.

We will stay in the Elgin Hotel for three nights. This elegant hotel combines tradition with modernity and was once the residence of the Maharaja of Cooch Bihar, this lovely building is 120 years old. Guests are greeted by draping a

silken Khada around the neck in typical Himalayan tradition and the decor is of oak floorboards and panelling, fireplaces and antique Burma teak furniture. The en suite rooms are very comfortable and offer a wide range of facilities. Authentic Indian and continental dishes are served here as well as many local recipes.

## Days 10 – 11

## Sunday – Monday

### Darjeeling

With a backdrop of mighty snow-clad Himalayan peaks, Darjeeling is the most important hill resort in eastern India. The mighty Kanchenjunga peak overlooks the town and with luck we will also see the world's highest peak, Mount Everest, from near the town. There is a great deal to interest visitors here, we will visit Tiger Hill which offers views of the Kanchenjunga and we will also be exploring Darjeeling on foot, visiting the Nightingale Park, enjoying the colonial style buildings of the British Raj and



Toy Train, Darjeeling

visiting some of the town's attractive locations, such as Observatory Hill (known as 'The Mall') and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI). The Mall is a hill near the main square in Darjeeling, Chowrasta. There are wonderful views of the Himalayas from The Mall. Situated at an elevation of 2,100 metres, the HMI was founded in 1954 after the historic conquest of Everest on the 29th May 1953 by Tenzing Norgay (a Sherpa) from Darjeeling and Sir Edmund Hillary, from New Zealand. During our stay in Darjeeling we will mostly relax and explore the town on our own. We will also get some time for souvenir shopping.

### Darjeeling Himalayan Railway or the 'Toy Train'

The Toy Train is one of the most famous narrow gauge trains in the world. Highlights of a trip on this train include the Batasia Loop with its spectacular views down into Darjeeling and of the surrounding high peaks, Tiger Hill – the highest station on the line and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Gurkha War Memorial and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.



Yiga Choling Monastery, Darjeeling

Narrow gauge steam engine trains still operate with their original steam engines and the loops and the zigzags along the route are remarkable feats of engineering. We will take a short ride from Darjeeling town to Ghoom, the nearest station. It is a joy ride in itself. The Toy Train is considered an engineering marvel and railway enthusiasts regard it as one of the wonders of the world, worth preserving forever.



## Batasia Loop

About 5 kilometres from Darjeeling, this railway loop is a marvellous feat of engineering and with its magnificent view of Darjeeling town and Kanchenjunga Mountain it is well worth the experience, whether aboard the Toy Train or just watching the Toy Train pass through this loop.

## Himalayan Mountaineering Institute

This was founded in 1954 after the historic conquest of Everest on the 29th May 1953, when two people reached its summit. They were the Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay, from Darjeeling and Sir Edmund Hillary from New Zealand. As an honour to the great Sherpa this institute was formed with the aim of imparting mountaineering skills to enthusiasts. Tenzing Norgay was one of the founding members of HMI and also served as field director of the Institute. HMI also houses a museum which holds a rare collection of mementoes from various Everest expeditions.

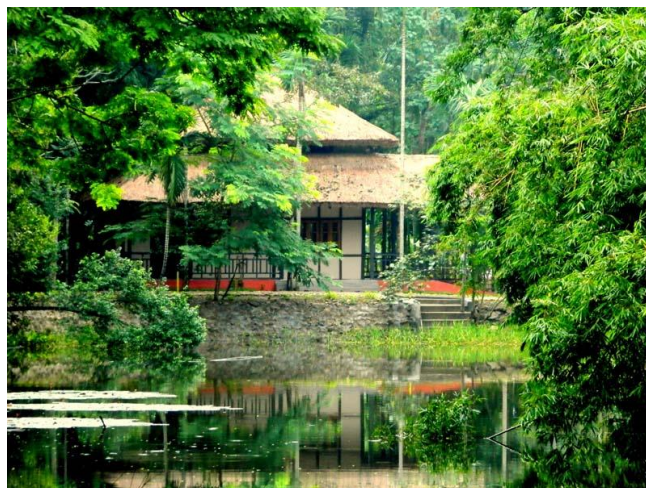
## Day 12

**Tuesday**

### Kaziranga (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

It is going to be a very long day! Today we say goodbye to Darjeeling and proceed to the airport at Bagdogra where we board our flight to Guwahati in Assam.

On arrival at Guwahati Airport we will meet our vehicle and driver then spend the remainder of the afternoon driving to Kaziranga Tiger Reserve (a 5 hour drive), where we will settle into the Infinity Lodge. This is a small, comfortable lodge which offers en suite rooms with showers and is set in a pleasant garden. It is surrounded by open grassland and some wooded areas, both of which are good for birding.



Kaziranga, with an area of 430 square kilometres, is one of the world's most beautiful national park and Tiger reserves. It lies on the south bank of the great Brahmaputra River and is one of the last haunts of the Indian One-horned Rhinoceros. The area was first given protection as a forest reserve in the early years of the 20th century but it was not opened to visitors until 1938 and it was not until 1954 that the Indian One-horned Rhinoceros was given complete statutory protection, allowing Kaziranga to become the most important, and one of the last remaining, refuges for this endangered mammal. The wildlife sanctuary was given National Park status in 1974. Today



Wild Asian Elephants in Kaziranga



there are over 1,100 rhinos in the park, a figure which represents over 70% of the world total. The Reserve is also home to the Asian Elephant, Water Buffalo and Swamp Deer.

## Days 13 – 15

## Wednesday – Friday

### Kaziranga Tiger Reserve

We will spend our three full days in Kaziranga exploring the park by jeep. On one of the mornings, we will also visit the Hoolock Gibbon Sanctuary, which is just under two hours' drive from Kaziranga. There will be ample time for birdwatching and photography.

Kaziranga is a vast area of swamps interspersed with broad tracts of tall elephant grass, open forests, watercourses (known as 'heels') and reedbeds. To the south the ground rises to 1,200 metres to form the Mikir Hills, an important refuge for the Reserve's wildlife when the lowlands flood during the annual monsoon.

In addition to seeing the highly endangered Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, we also hope to see Kaziranga's important population of wild Water Buffalo, (one of the last remaining wild populations), and a variety of other mammal species, such as Rhesus Macaque, Common and Capped Langurs, Sambar, Swamp Deer, Barking Deer, Hog Deer, Smooth coated Otter, and Wild Boar. We will also make every effort to locate the other more elusive inhabitants of the Reserve such as the wild Elephant and Hoolock Gibbon. Birdlife is equally diverse and among the bird species found here is an exceptional range of waterbirds – cormorants, herons, egrets, storks, geese, ducks, waders and terns, birds of prey, and regional specialities such as Swamp Francolin, Bengal Florican, Abbott's Babbler, Black-breasted Thrush, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, and Little Spiderhunter. It really is a wonderful place to visit.

## Day 16

## Saturday

### Transfer to Guwahati & Flight to Delhi

We will finally pack our bags and leave Kaziranga, travelling by road to Guwahati where we will board our flight to Delhi. On arrival in the capital we transfer to The Pullman Hotel or one of the airport hotels for an overnight stay.

## Day 17

## Sunday

### Flight to London

In the morning we will transfer to Delhi airport for our return flight to London, via Doha, arriving at round 6pm.

**NB. Please note that the itinerary above offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some reordering 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.**

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## Grading

This is an adventurous tour based around simple accommodation. Most of the wildlife viewing will be done by walks, and jeep drives, however, so this trip does not demand a high level of fitness.

## Weather

This holiday takes place in the post-monsoon period, when Nepal enjoys its good weather conditions. In the lowlands days will be warm to hot (up to 26°C), but nights will be much cooler and frosts are possible.

In India dry, sunny weather is expected throughout this tour, although it will be very chilly in the early mornings and evenings particularly during morning game-drives at Kaziranga. This holiday takes place during the Indian winter and dry season (though as Assam has the highest rainfall on Earth there is perhaps no season that can genuinely be considered a dry season!). Although cloud and perhaps some rain is likely in the hills, we hope to have plenty of clear weather with warm days in the lowlands but chilly nights.



Naturetrek Group, Kaziranga



## Clothing

Please inspect the separate clothing list, which will be sent to you on booking, thoroughly. Warm clothing will be needed for mornings and evenings and a warm jacket and gloves may be useful on the tour up Tiger Hill in Darjeeling. Shorts and T-shirts will be essential in the heat of the lowlands.

## Inclusions / Exclusions

The following costs are included in the price of the holiday:

- International flights in economy class.
- Full board accommodation throughout (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner) except for main meals required in Delhi & Kathmandu (the range of restaurants here is exceptional, and well worth taking advantage of). We use comfortable tourist lodges with private facilities (as described in the text above).
- All transport and guiding.
- All wildlife excursions, park fees and reserve entry fees.

The following costs are **not** included and should be budgeted for:

- Visa (India and Nepal).
- Drinks (though most lodges in the national parks provide boiled drinking water or a bottle of water with their compliments).
- Discretionary tipping (leaders and drivers). During the course of your holiday you will receive periodic assistance from a wide variety of enthusiastic, friendly and helpful local guides, jeep drivers, trackers, hotel porters, waiters and other local people. The tipping of these individuals will be handled by your tour leader(s) and its cost is included within the price of your holiday.
- Any other personal spending e.g. souvenirs, laundry, camera fees.

## Flights

We use the scheduled service of Qatar Airways for this tour to Kathmandu from London Heathrow, via Doha because they offer an excellent all-round service (including connecting departures from some of the regional airports, though such departures from regional airports will be subject to an additional charge of around £150) and competitive fares. If you would prefer to travel from a regional airports (at an additional cost of around £150) or fly in business class normally available at a supplement charge of around £2,695), please let us know at the time of booking.

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## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate

any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking. Please note that ‘The Best of India and Nepal tour’ tend to book up a long time in advance. Please book as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

**Please provide us with your passport details (passport number, date of issue, date of expiry and your date of birth) at the time of booking. It is important to note that game safaris will be booked using the same passport details that you provide us at the time of booking, and it will not be possible to change these details once they have been booked. (If you renew your passport after booking, please also bring the old passport whose details you gave us at the time of booking as this will also be required).**



Male Rhino



View of Darjeeling



Kaziranga National Park



Peacock in flight