

Nepal - Ibisbill Trek

Bargain Birdwatching Tour

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Dates

Saturday 27th April – Monday 6th May 2019

Cost: £2,895

Saturday 25th April – Monday 4th May 2020

Cost: £2,895

Cost

£2,895 (London/London);

£600 reduction if booked without flights, land only trip.

Single room supplement

£495

Grading

Grade B/C. It is a short trek (and involves only 6 nights under canvas) but we aim to cover plenty of ground during long – though often fairly slow – walks each day

Focus

Birds



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N.B. Please note that the itinerary below offers our target programme. However, adverse weather and 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. Most importantly on a trek, our overnight stops must be flexible to allow for the overall speed of each particular group and to



Rufous-bellied Niltava

accommodate 'on trek' sightings, which can mean that we ultimately choose to spend more time in some areas than others.

Day 1

Saturday

In Flight

We depart from London this evening on board Qatar Airways' scheduled flight to Kathmandu, via Doha. Please note that airlines flying to Kathmandu are very limited and therefore seats get booked up early. We may not always be able to accommodate group members on Qatar Airways, in which case alternatives such as Jet Airways or Gulf Air may be used on some occasions.

Day 2

Sunday

Kathmandu

Arriving in Kathmandu in mid-afternoon, we transfer to the Marshyangdi Hotel. The rest of the day is free for relaxation and preparing for the trek. In the evening we will have a trek briefing.

Day 3

Monday

Syabru Bensi – Camping

We make a very early start this morning, driving northwards to the riverside market town of Trisuli Bazaar – a journey of four hours. From here we continue on a rough military road which climbs high above the Trisuli River to the hill village of Dhunche. On this latter part of the drive, as we climb higher and higher along the eastern flank of the Trisuli Valley, we will start to look out for such riverside and hill specialities as White-capped River Chat, Plumbeous Water Redstart and Blue Whistling Thrush whilst, in the stands of Sal (*Shorea robusta*), a variety of mynas, Indian Roller and the localised Spot-winged Starling may be seen. We will pass through (and above!) pretty Tamang villages, steep terraced fields, and watery ravines filled with dense subtropical vegetation and tall alder groves. Moving higher all the time, we enter different zones. Pines replace alders before we reach remnant forests of oaks,

rhododendrons and hemlocks. All along the route the views are spectacular. Far below us now flows the Trisuli River; to the west stands snowbound Ganesh Himal, and at the head of the valley lie some of the high peaks of Tibet. We will try to reach the roadhead at Dhunche (1,830 metres) by late afternoon, from where we will descend to Syabru Bensi village (1,372 metres) for our first night under canvas beside the Langtang Khola River.

Syabru Bensi is an old trading town, where goods were traded between the people of Nepal and Tibet. Not long ago, it used to be the major trekking



Blue Whistling-thrush

highway for local traders to Tibet. The trade here has now considerably reduced because of better road communication in other parts of the country.

Syabru Bensi is situated at the confluence of the Bhote Khola and Langtang Khola Rivers. The majority of people here are Buddhists and come from the Tamang tribe. However, with the advent of tourism the village is now somewhat mixed with people also from the south. En route, while descending from Dhunche, we are likely to encounter numerous small birds in the roadside agricultural fields. We may also be able to glimpse some birds of prey and several river bird species.

Day 4

Tuesday

Lama Hotel – Camping

From the village of Syabru Bensi we will follow the Langtang Khola, which is the main river of the Langtang National Park and an outstanding area for wildlife. We soon enter the magnificent mixed forest that dominates the lower valley. Amongst oaks and rhododendrons, beautifully decorated with mosses and lichens, are Himalayan Black

Bears, Red Pandas and Leopards! Sadly they are very hard to see, but we have a good chance of seeing Himalayan Tahr (a large and shaggy, brown goat), Common Goral and Royal's Pika, plus numerous flowers and birds. The latter include many species of sunbird, rosefinch, woodpecker, flycatcher and warbler, and such forest gems as Bay Woodpecker, Red-headed Bullfinch, Mrs Gould's Sunbird, Beautiful Niltava and two species of ground warbler (or tesia). We will also stop along the way to inspect cliff-hanging bees' nests which sometimes have the rare and very elusive Himalayan Honeyguide in attendance!

By this evening we should be in the heart of the subtropical-temperate forest of the lower Langtang Valley, and will spend the night in the Lama Hotel area.



Mrs Gould's Sunbird

Day 5

Wednesday

Langtang – Camping

We will spend as much of today as possible walking and birdwatching in the fine forests of the lower Langtang Valley as we continue our trek slowly northwards through the forest, with occasional tantalising glimpses of Langtang Lirung (one of the region's highest peaks) through the evergreen oak trees, until at last the trail enters open ground at Ghora Tabela (2,987 metres). There was once a Tibetan resettlement project here, but now the only residents are the soldiers of a Nepalese army post. We are entering a different habitat now as the valley broadens and climbs above the tree line. There are a few temporary settlements here, used by the herders who bring their livestock up to graze in the high pastures each summer. Amongst the scrub, boulders and potato fields, as we approach Langtang village, are flocks of Snow Pigeons and Choughs, Hodgson's Mountain Finches, Rufous-

breasted Accentors, Tickell's Warblers and Blue-fronted Redstarts. We camp near Langtang (3,307 metres), a village built in Tibetan style which accommodates the headquarters of the National Park and a Buddhist monastery. In the stone-walled fields around the village, potatoes and buckwheat are grown; in the pastures above the village yaks are grazed.

Day 6

Thursday

Kyangjin – Camping

Today we will start early, after breakfast, on a morning's ascent to the village of Kyangjin, situated at 3,720 metres in the Upper Langtang Valley.

Beyond Langtang village the valley opens out further and the views become more extensive. To our left is the impressive sight of Langtang Himal, and ahead is the great snow-covered bulk of Ganchempo. By lunch time we should reach the monastery of



Kyangjin, set well above the Langtang River and surrounded by snowy peaks. There is a cheese factory here, set up in 1955 with Swiss technical aid. During the summer months large quantities of yak's cheese are produced, which can be purchased at the factory. We will spend the afternoon exploring and are likely to focus our attention in particular on the braided, stony riverbed in this bleak but spectacular alpine wilderness. Here, breeding Ibisbills are to be found; whilst the high mountain scenery is stunning, and the peaks and ice-falls all enveloping. We will camp tonight in the alpine meadows at the edge of Kyangjin, allowing an opportunity to fully appreciate these Himalayan uplands.

Day 7

Friday

Ghora Tabela – Camping

After spending time during the first part of the morning in further exploration of the alpine habitats around Kyangjin, we will begin our descent to Ghora Tabela around mid-morning, taking a packed lunch with us. During the rest of the day, as we walk back down the Langtang Valley again, we will be able to enjoy the birds and flowers we have now come to know and be alert for new ones! We will camp tonight on the edge of the forest at Ghora Tabela.

Day 8

Saturday

Syabru or Syabru Bensi Camping

For most of today's long walk we will be passing through the extensive oak and rhododendron forest again which holds a great variety of trees, and a lush undergrowth ideal for many species of Laughingthrush and other ground-feeding birds. In particular we will be looking for the recently



discovered Nepal Wren-babbler – a new species for science discovered as recently as 1991. A hot afternoon climb brings us to the village of Thulo Syabru, strung out along a ridge at 2,134 metres, which produces excellent "rakshi", the local fire-water. At the top of the village prayer wheels are kept turning by the waters of a stream.

Thulo Syabru is an old Tamang (one of Nepal's many different ethnic groups) village situated on a steep slope above the thundering Langtang River. The Tamangs are a Buddhist people, and there is a small Gompa (or monastery) in the village. Before the advent of tourism, from which many of the villagers now make a living, the region was self-sufficient, relying on the cultivation of such crops as wheat, millet, potatoes, barley, buck-wheat and maize. However, once the Langtang National Park was established in 1976, this village's prominence astride the main trekking route assured it of prosperity. We will camp here tonight and try the rakshi if desired!

Day 9

Sunday

Kathmandu

This morning we will rise early in order to descend to Bharkhu. Here our bus will be waiting for us, and we will spend much of the rest of the day driving back to Kathmandu. Back in the Hotel Marshyangdi, a hot shower will be most welcome, as will that long-awaited restaurant meal!

Day 10

Monday

London

Today we must transfer to Kathmandu airport for our return flight to London. It should be noted that some flights will arrive back into London early on Tuesday morning, being an overnight flight back from Kathmandu. Flight times will be confirmed closer to departure dates.

Trek grading

This trek is graded B/C. It is a short trek (and involves only 6 nights under canvas) but we aim to cover plenty of ground during long – though often fairly slow – walks each day. On average we will walk for eight or nine hours and cover 12 – 24 kilometres (8 – 15 miles) each day. The tour therefore is definitely not suitable for those that do not like camping or walking! However, anyone who is fit and enjoys walking will cope comfortably. Altitude should not be a problem, even though much of the trek is at a fair height. We acclimatise slowly on this trek and altitude sickness should be avoided; but this does not mean that you will not sometimes feel breathless when ascending.

Typical day on trek

At about 6.00 a.m. (soon after dawn) you will be woken with a mug of tea brought by our Nepali cooks. Hot water for washing will soon follow, after which you will get up and pack your personal gear. By this time breakfast will be ready, and while you are eating it the camp staff will take down your tent and begin packing up all the equipment. After breakfast we begin walking, usually about 7.00 a.m., and continue until about midday when we stop for lunch. Lunch is usually a leisurely meal (of up to an hour) and is often the best time to wash yourself and relax.



After lunch we usually walk for another three or four hours, stopping to make camp around 4.00-5.00 p.m. We will of course stop at intervals during each day's walk, not only to watch the wildlife we find, but to photograph the views and local activities and to enjoy a cup of tea in some of the many trailside teahouses. Everyone is entirely free to walk and enjoy the mountains at their own pace; our treks are in no way like regimented school outings, we always keep a Sherpa to bring up the rear, as well as Sherpa guides amongst the party, to indicate the route.

Once we have stopped for the night, the camp staff put up the tents and the cooks prepare the evening meal. This is served soon after dark, and it can well be over by 7.00 p.m.! Depending on the temperature, you may then choose to play cards, relax, write notes, chat, or even sing and dance with our local staff; or you may prefer to dive into the warmth of your sleeping bag. By 9.00 p.m. you will probably be asleep, though the gentle revelries of the local staff may go on longer, and it is not unusual for the night to be punctuated by dogs howling at each other across the valley in inhabited areas (hence earplugs on the equipment list is a must!).

Weather

The late spring is not the most popular season for trekking; this is because the lowland areas of Nepal (up to 1,524 metres) are hot at this time of the year, and because cloud and occasional pre-monsoon rain can restrict visibility. It is, however, by far the best season for the naturalist: birds are singing and abundant, flowers are everywhere. Further, our route can be blocked by snow during the clearer winter months. This is therefore the obvious season to complete one of the best wildlife treks in Nepal. Undoubtedly it will be fairly hot at the beginning and end of

our trek (75 - 85°F or 23 - 29°C), but most of our route (7 days) is between 1,839 and 3,658 metres where temperatures are much more manageable; they will range between 40 - 75°F (4 - 23°C), depending on whether the sun is in or out! Night-time temperatures are



likely to drop towards freezing point at all our high camps. Mornings at this time of the year are usually clear and sunny (a good time for mountain views) but cloud is quite usual during the afternoon and may occasionally bring rain. Dramatic, pre-monsoon storms can occur, though if they do, it is usually late in the day, and they tend to leave clear skies and fresh snow atop the high peaks. Such conditions are ideal for photography. In Kathmandu it is likely to be hot and sunny (up to 85°F or 29°C), though sometimes cloudy and wet in the afternoons.

Clothing

Please inspect the separate clothing list, sent to you on booking, thoroughly.

Warm clothing will be important on this trek. You will need a good “3 or 4 seasons” sleeping bag and a duvet/quilted jacket, gloves and a balaclava will also be useful to those who feel the cold. Shorts and T-shirts will be just as essential, especially if you plan to extend your holiday to the lowlands of Nepal.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All accommodation and meals are included, except for lunches and dinners in Kathmandu. Allow £25.

All accommodation on this tour is simple but comfortable, with private facilities included in Kathmandu. On trek we use standard 2-person tents; we also have a "loo tent" and a dining tent. All luggage is carried by porters (except for your daypack), a camp team erects the camp each night, and a "cook team" looks after all the catering and washing up!

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for Nepal, which is obtainable in advance from your nearest Embassy. No vaccinations are mandatory for entry, but as recommended in our brochure we think it is wise to be protected against TB, polio, typhoid, tetanus and hepatitis A and take malaria prophylactics. We recommend that you consult your GP or local Travel Health Clinic about your requirements as soon as possible before travelling.

Bird lists and previous tour reports

Where available these are automatically provided on booking, and will gladly be sent to you before, if you wish for a more detailed preview.

Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday: visa, national park fees, currently US\$20 per day (paid locally in US dollars or UK Pounds, depending on activities on arrival and departure days); similar amount for the trekking permit and all items of a more personal nature such as drinks, laundry, souvenirs, and tips for your guide and driver.



Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Nepal. 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.fco.gov.uk/travel or telephone 0870 6060290 regularly prior to travel.

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, 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 as all our Bargain Selection tours are carefully costed on groups of 16 persons to maximise value for money, it may be necessary to impose a small group surcharge of 10% on groups falling short of this size.

Other extensions

As you will appreciate, this holiday to Nepal is short and action-packed! Inevitably there are many other interesting places to visit in Nepal should you have time. As the majority of your holiday cost is spent on air fares, we would strongly recommend an extension to your 10-day holiday. We should be delighted to tailor a holiday extension for you that is suited to your particular objectives and needs. You might wish to sample some of the cultural delights of Nepal, for example, or even to visit another national park or tiger reserve. In Nepal, anything is possible; just call our very own India consultant, Rajan Jolly, on 01962 73301, for expert advice.

It should be noted that flight times vary on different days of the week – some return flights will be day-time flights, whilst others depart Kathmandu in the evening and arrive into the UK the following morning.

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