

Nepal — Birds of Mountains & Marshlands

(Birdwatching Holiday for Beginners)

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Kathmandu.
Day 3/6	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Dharan forest.
Day 7/8	Kathmandu.
Day 9	Fly London.



Chitwan National Park Extension

Day 9/11	Chitwan National Park.
Day 12	Kathmandu.
Day 13	Fly London.



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Dates 2021

Sunday 17th January – Monday 25th January 2021 (beginner's tour) Cost: £2,495
Chitwan Extension to: Friday, 29th January 2021 Cost: £995

Dates 2022

Sunday 16th January – Monday 24th January 2022 (beginner's tour) Cost: £2,695
Chitwan Extension to: Friday, 28th January 2022 Cost: £995

Single room supplement

From £295 (Add: £95 for extension)

Grading

Wildlife walks and river journeys of your choice.
Grade A

Focus

Birds, mammals and Nepalese culture



The view from the flight to Koshi

N.B. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. 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.

A 9-day birdwatching holiday to the hills of Kathmandu Valley and the bird-rich lowland wetlands, forests and grasslands of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (plus optional Chitwan National Park extension).



Koshi Camp

Day 1

Sunday

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 Emirates or Turkish Airlines may be used on some occasions.

Day 2

Monday

Kathmandu

We arrive in Kathmandu in mid-afternoon and transfer to the Marshyangdi Hotel, our base for a night. Those who prefer not to spend the rest of the afternoon relaxing may have time for a little sightseeing.

Days 3 – 6

Tuesday – Friday

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

We will fly this morning past Mount Everest, Makalu and Kanchenjunga to Biratnagar, situated on the Gangetic floodplains of south-eastern Nepal, and drive for one and a half hours to reach Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. Here we will be based for the next four nights in simple but comfortable permanent tents, situated close to the banks of the Koshi River. The Reserve is situated in the Sapt-Koshi river plain in the far eastern corner of

Nepal, close to the country's southern border with India, and covers 175 square kilometres to the north of the kilometre-long barrage that spans the great 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 arable land that lie around it offer an outstanding wetland habitat, and one of the finest birdwatching sites in Asia.



Clockwise from top left: Spotted Owlet, Jungle Cats, Indian Flying Foxes and Naturetrek clients birdwatching beside the Koshi River

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 100 species should be seen each day (our record is 174!) in this wonderful area, amongst them such local specialities as Swamp Francolin, Red-necked Falcon and Bristled Grassbird. The ornithological attractions of Koshi are year round. During October and November and again from February to mid-May the area is a prime site for trans-Himalayan migrants, and in the winter months vast numbers of wildfowl reside on the reserve. From October to May the woodlands and marshes are graced with species including Siberian Rubythroat, Scaly and Black-throated Thrushes, Citrine Wagtail, Falcated Duck, Baer's Pochard (very rare), Pallid Harrier, Tickell's Leaf Warbler and Black-faced Bunting to name but a few. By contrast, May offers a wide range of interesting summer monsoon visitors, amongst them such sought-after species as Watercock, Yellow Bittern, Bengal Florican, Jerdon's Bushchat, plus a variety of rare and occasional migrants. The heart of the Reserve lies some 14 km north of the barrage, where seasonally inundated grasslands, lagoons and remnant patches of Khair (*Acacia catechu*) and Sissoo (*Dalbergia sissoo*) forest lie alongside the eastern bank of the broad Koshi River. This region is the last refuge of the wild Water Buffalo in Nepal, and other mammals include Leopard, Fishing Cat, Jungle Cat, Asiatic Jackal, Indian Smooth Otter, Wild Boar, Spotted Deer, Hog Deer and Nilgai (or "Blue Bull") – the subcontinent's largest antelope. The

sharp-eyed may also be lucky enough to see one of the endangered Gangetic River Dolphins; whilst both Gharial and Marsh Mugger Crocodiles are frequently seen.

Since this tour does not follow a set itinerary (in order to accommodate the interests of all of each party), the choice of each day's excursion will be up to you, and our guides will assist and accompany you insofar as you wish. Your most regular and rewarding wildlife outings will be on foot, exploring the grasslands, river, lagoons and woodlands close to the camp in the company of one of our resident naturalists. We will also take you by raft onto the wide waters of the Koshi River to enjoy the birdlife of the otherwise inaccessible sandbanks and islands. Black-necked Storks, Greater Thick-knee and Black-bellied Tern are all regular on this trip, and with luck even a Gharial (the endangered fish-eating crocodile) may be spotted basking on an exposed sandbank.

For those of you with an interest in local culture and the day-to-day lives of the local fishing and farming communities, our staff will be pleased to show you around one of the nearby villages.



Naturetrek clients rafting on the Koshi River

Day 7

Saturday

Kathmandu

Today we must leave Koshi and begin the one and a half hour drive to Biratnagar, a bustling town situated in the Gangetic floodplains of south-eastern Nepal, where we catch our plane to Kathmandu. Heading west, the flight gives spectacular views of the Himalayas (weather permitting) including distant views of the world's highest peak, Everest. Our last couple of nights in Nepal will be spent in Kathmandu, where a walk to the restaurant this evening may well produce Night Heron, Indian Flying Foxes again, and even Barn Owl, as all regularly fly over the city at dusk.

Day 8

Sunday

Kathmandu

Today we will spend walking on the forested slopes of Phulchowki, at 2,740 metres the highest peak in the valley. Marble quarrying is sadly affecting the area but it still remains a wonderful spot for wildlife – birds, plants and mammals. We will drive up Phulchowki in the morning, ascending as far as the snow will allow. Here we should get good views of the snow-clad Great Himalaya, including the Annapurna range, Langtang and many of

Nepal's other high peaks (provided the weather is clear!). We will then spend the rest of the day walking down the mountain through its fine temperate and subtropical forest, with a picnic lunch en route. Amongst an abundant birdlife we will encounter a variety of colourful laughingthrushes, babblers, bulbuls, flowerpeckers, flycatchers, sunbirds, tits and warblers. Such avian specialities as Himalayan Bluetail, Fire-tailed Sunbird, White-collared and Grey-winged Blackbirds, Long-tailed Minivet, White-tailed Nuthatch and Orange-bellied Leafbird may all be seen, and there is a chance also of encountering some of the more elusive species such as Himalayan Cutia, Kalij Pheasant, Red-billed Leiothrix and Black-faced Leaf Warbler.

Mammals are, of course, more elusive. However, stealthy progress may reward us with views of some of the more common diurnal species. The cheeky Rhesus Macaques that scavenge a living around the villages are far from shy; their far more elegant cousins, the Grey Langurs, are more wary, and more likely to be encountered in outlying fields or amongst the canopy of the forest. The reclusive Assamese Macaque is still more wary and infrequently encountered. Higher up the mountain, the Himalayan Orange-bellied Squirrel is the most likely mammal to be found, preferring the oak and rhododendron forests. The exquisite Yellow-throated Marten is also worth looking for, being regularly seen here; whilst the Indian Muntjac, though regularly heard on the mountain, is less easy to see. Such animals as Leopard and Red Panda have been seen on rare occasions in the past by our groups but you should consider yourself very lucky to encounter one of these sought-after species!

If you would prefer to spend the day doing a sightseeing tour of the city and temples of Kathmandu we will be pleased to arrange this for you (but this must be booked with us prior to your departure from London and will cost £195 for single traveller and £150 per person for 2 or more). The tour will include Nepal's largest Hindu temple at Pashupatinath, the Buddhist "stupa" (shrine) and Tibetan settlement at Boudhinath, the Buddhist "monkey temple" at Swyambunath with its fine view over the city, and the temples and old royal palace in Kathmandu's Durbar Square.



Clockwise from left: Phulchowki, White-tailed Nuthatch, Elephant statue and a temple in Kathmandu

Day 9

Monday

Kathmandu

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.

Chitwan National Park Extension

The Chitwan National Park, in the lowland jungles – “terai” – of Nepal, comprises 932 square kilometres of sal and riverine forest and grassland. It is a magnificent and unspoilt "jungle" environment with a greater variety of wildlife than any other area of Nepal. Over 500 bird species have been recorded in the park and we can expect to see nearly half of these, as well as many mammals and reptiles which are likely to include the endangered Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, Wild Boar, Sambar, Muntjac, Spotted and Hog Deer, Rhesus and Hanuman Monkeys, and possibly Marsh Mugger and the fish-eating Gharial Crocodiles. Leopards, Sloth Bears and Gaur (wild bison) are all regularly seen, particularly at this time of the year when the water is limited and populations more concentrated. Tigers also occur here and it is always a possibility that we will be lucky enough to see one of these magnificent animals



Watching Indian Rhinoceros

Cost: £995

Single room supplement: £95

(The minimum number of people required to run this extension is five, however we may run it in case of less numbers at our discretion, with local guides.)

Day 9

Monday

Chitwan National Park

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 Water Redstart, Brown Dipper and if we are very lucky, perhaps one of the wintering Wallcreepers that frequent the road and riverside rock faces. We hope to arrive at the Chitwan National Park by mid-afternoon where we will transfer to our comfortable Tigerland Safari Lodge for 3 nights. Located on the edge of Chitwan National Park, Tigerland Safari Lodge is spread over 20 acres of land and have 32 thatched roofs villas on stilts in a natural setting of lush vegetation, overlooking the national park. The villas are tastefully decorated with en suite facilities.



Peacock

The park comprises 932 square kilometres of Sal and riverine jungle, 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. These are likely to include the endangered Greater One-horned Rhinoceros, Wild Boar, Sambar, Muntjac, Spotted and Hog Deer, Rhesus and Hanuman Monkeys, and possibly Marsh Mugger and the fish-eating Gharial Crocodiles. Leopards, Sloth Bears,



and Gaur (wild bison) are all fairly common and occasionally seen by the lucky ones! Tigers do occur in the area but are very elusive and difficult to

Indian Peafowl (left) and
Giant Hornbills (right)

Days 10 – 11

Tuesday – Wednesday

Chitwan National Park

We will be based in Chitwan National Park for two full days. Making early starts we will spend the first few hours of daylight exploring the surrounding riverine forest and grassland. Most mammals, including the Rhino, are often easiest to see at this time of day. This is certainly 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 in search of further mammal species, and the park's rich and colourful birdlife, on foot through the forest. These should be outstanding days.

Day 12

Thursday

Kathmandu

After a final morning's game drive or walk in the reserve, we must reluctantly leave Chitwan today, making the long drive back to Kathmandu. Here we transfer into the city, to the Marshyangdi Hotel, for the night prior to our return flight to London tomorrow morning.

Day 13

Friday

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 Sunday morning, being an overnight flight back from Kathmandu. Flight times will be confirmed closer to departure dates.

Grading

Wildlife walks, drives, and river journeys of your choice. This is a holiday suitable for those of all ages and degrees of fitness!

Weather

As our programme avoids the high regions, and concentrates primarily on the lowland attractions at Koshi, you can expect excellent weather throughout the winter (November to March), with daytime temperatures between 65 – 80°F (18 – 27°C). Nights will be much cooler, and frosts are always possible in Kathmandu. Rain at this time of year is unusual but heavy downpours can occur. Daytime temperatures in Kathmandu and on Phulchowki will be much lower, generally around 50 – 70°F (10 - 21°C). During the summer (April to October) temperatures will be 20 - 30°F higher! The monsoon season – July to September – is very hot and very wet, and generally to be avoided!

Clothing

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

Warm clothing will be useful for mornings and evenings, and a warm jacket and gloves will be useful on the tour up Phulchowki during the winter months. Shorts and T-shirts will be equally essential in the heat of the lowlands and during our May departure.

How does this trip benefit the local community and wildlife?

All the tours that involve the tours in the lowlands of Nepal bring revenue to the national parks and protected areas to fund in conservation of its habitat and protect the wildlife found there. The lodges employ the locals who in turn get direct income in the form of a salary, 10% service charge and tips from happy customers. The locally grown fresh vegetables and other food items like meat, eggs, milk etc. bring direct income to the local economy. The locals and school children that meet us while birdwatching or wildlife viewing get knowledge of the importance of birds and wildlife in our environment. The different local Birdwatching clubs across Nepal involve locals and school children in the conservation of birds and wildlife and its habitat in their respective community forests. The clubs are directly or indirectly helped by Nature Safari Tours, one of Naturetrek's ground agents in Nepal, monetarily or by providing expertise to helping in conducting conservation, awareness and educational activities at the local level. The staff that work in the hotel in Kathmandu, and all resorts at the national parks get the benefit of 10% service charge. A happy client also always leaves some tips to those who have been helpful in making their trip comfortable, safe and fun-filled.

Food & accommodation included in the price

The cost of all meals and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday, with the exception of lunches and dinners in Kathmandu. Allow £35.

We use the Marshyangdi Hotel in Kathmandu, a simple but comfortable hotel in the city; all rooms have private facilities. In Koshi and Suklaphanta, we stay at our own permanent tented camp, consisting of large walk-in safari-style tents with comfortable twin beds and simply furnished with locally made cane furniture. Toilets and showers are shared. Simple en-suite accommodation may be available at the nearby private research centre.

Mammal & bird lists

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 Chitwan extension and all items of a more personal nature such as drinks, laundry, souvenirs, and tips for your guide and driver (allow £35).

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.

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.

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 9-day holiday. If you don't fancy our scheduled Chitwan extension, 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 Nepal 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.

How to book your place!

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read our main Naturetrek brochure thoroughly and complete and return the enclosed booking form, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost.. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please give us a call on 01962 733051, and we will gladly post one to you. Alternatively, you are welcome to book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk

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

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