

India – Kerala's National Parks & Backwaters

Naturetrek Tour Report

12th – 20th November 2023

Tour report by Abhilash



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Tour participants: Abhilash (leader) with 7 Naturetrek Clients.

Day 1

Sunday 12th November

Travel to Cochin

Day 2

Monday 13th November

Cochin - Kumarakom

The group assembled at Cochin Airport and left for Kumarakom at 10.00, arriving at the Rhythm Kumarakom Resort at 12.45. We went out birding by boat at 15.10, and after an exploration of the backwaters came back by 19.00. Everyone was fairly tired, so we took dinner at 20.00 and slept well.

Day 3

Tuesday 14th November

Houseboat

We started birding at 06.50, again by boat which allowed us some good sightings. We returned at 09.00 for breakfast, and left for Alleppey at 11.15. We arrived there and boarded the boat at 12.50. It was a four-bedroom boat, with two rooms on each deck. After lunch we did a spot of birdwatching in the paddyfields. The boat was anchored at 17.45. We then went for a walk for an hour in the village and did some more birding.

Day 4

Wednesday 15th November

Periyar

We went for a birding walk for an hour at 07.00, had breakfast at 08.30, and went for a short cruise. We got off the boat at 09.45 and drove towards Periyar. After lunch at a local restaurant en route, we reached Periyar and checked into Aranya Nivas at 14.50. The delayed baggage was delivered by the airline to the hotel! We went for a boat safari at 15.30, with some excellent sightings, and then continued for the 'Jungle Scout' programme at 18.30. We did see a fair bit during the walk. We returned to the hotel at 21.30.

Day 5

Thursday 16th November

Periyar

In the morning we went on the 'Bamboo Rafting' programme with the Forest Department team. The trip including both walking sections and (unsurprisingly!) a raft tour. Lunch was a picnic lunch by the lakeside. We returned back to the boat landing by 17.00. The group met for dinner at 19.30 and then retired for the night.

Day 6**Friday 17th November**

Munnar

We went for the early morning 'Green Walk', which was very productive: we saw many birds, plus some great mammals including Gaurs and wild Asian Elephants. We returned back to the hotel at 09.45. After breakfast, we left Periyar at 11.00 towards Munnar. After lunch at a local restaurant, we did a bit of birding en route and reached Tea County Munnar by 17.00. We checked-in, and the remainder of the day was spent at leisure.

Day 7**Saturday 18th November**

Munnar

We left the hotel very early with packed breakfasts, and reached Eravikulam National Park at 07.30. We got the shuttle bus to the top at 08.15. We took a walk at the top and saw the endangered Nilgiri Tahr and some birds. We returned to the hotel for lunch, and while we did go out in the afternoon to the Pothamedu area it was raining, which hampered our sightings somewhat. We returned to the hotel for dinner at 17.30.

Day 8**Sunday 19th November**

Cochin

We left the hotel after breakfast at 09.15. Lunch was arranged en route at a local restaurant. We drove straight to Mattancherry for an orientation tour of Cochin. We visited the Dutch Palace, the Synagogue and the colourful streets. Later, we drove across to Fort Cochin, visited St Francis's Church and the Chinese fishing-nets, and then walked across to the Killians. We checked in at 17.00, and then went out for the Kathakali dance performance at 17.40. We returned after the show at 19.30 and had dinner at the hotel.

Day 9**Monday 20th November**

Departure

We left the hotel at 04.15 for the airport, and said our farewells after an enjoyable tour.

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	November 2023						
		13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓				
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	✓		✓				
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓	✓			
Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓				
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>				✓			
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Yellow Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>			✓				
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	✓						
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Eurasian White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				✓			
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>		✓	✓				
Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓
Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>			✓				
Black Baza	<i>Aviceda leuphotes</i>				✓			
Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>				✓	✓		
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>						✓	
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>							✓

Common name	Scientific name	November 2023						
		13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Grey-headed Fish-eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>				✓			
Crested Serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>						✓	
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓						
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciatus</i>						✓	
Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>			✓				
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						✓	
Painted Bush-quail	<i>Perdica erythrorhyncha</i>						✓	
Grey Junglefowl	<i>Gallus sonneratii</i>				✓			
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>		✓					
Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>		✓					
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		✓	✓				
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	✓	✓					
Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	✓	✓					
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓						
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	✓			✓		✓	
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>		✓					
Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>		✓					
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	✓						
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓	✓					
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	✓	✓					
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓						
River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>		✓					
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓					
Nilgiri Wood-pigeon	<i>Columba elphinstonii</i>							✓
Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>					✓	✓	
Pompadour Green-pigeon	<i>Treron pompadora</i>					✓		
Green Imperial-pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>						✓	
Mountain Imperial-pigeon	<i>Ducula badia</i>			✓				
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	✓	✓					
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>				✓	✓		
Malabar Parakeet	<i>Psittacula columboides</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Vernal Hanging-parrot	<i>Loriculus vernalis</i>					✓	✓	
Common Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Cuculus varius</i>					✓		
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	✓	✓					
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	✓	✓					
Brown Hawk-owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>	✓						
Indian Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus unicolor</i>						✓	
Asian Palm-swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>	✓						
Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>				✓			
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓			✓			
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>			✓	✓			
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>				✓			
Malabar Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyeros griseus</i>					✓		
White-cheeked Barbet	<i>Megalaima viridis</i>		✓			✓		
Crimson-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima rubricapilla</i>				✓			

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Brown-capped Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos moluccensis</i>				✓			
Rufous Woodpecker	<i>Celeus brachyurus</i>				✓			
Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>					✓		
Common Flameback	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>				✓	✓		
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	✓	✓		✓			
Heart-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Hemicircus canente</i>				✓			
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica domicola</i>						✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓					
White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla madaraspatensis</i>			✓	✓			
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓	✓	✓	
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>				✓			
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>				✓			
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>					✓	✓	
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Iole indica</i>						✓	
Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>					✓	✓	
Malabar Whistling-thrush	<i>Myophonus horsfieldii</i>						✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>						✓	
White-bellied Shortwing	<i>Brachypteryx major</i>						✓	
Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>		✓					
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>		✓					
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>		✓					
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>		✓			✓		
Tickell's Leaf-warbler	<i>Phylloscopus affinis</i>						✓	
Green Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides nitidus</i>						✓	
Nilgiri Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias albicaudata</i>						✓	
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>						✓	
Indian Blue Robin	<i>Luscinia brunnea</i>						✓	
Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>				✓	✓	✓	
Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>						✓	
Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	✓	✓					
Grey-breasted Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax jerdoni</i>						✓	
Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>				✓	✓		
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>				✓			
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>				✓			
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>	✓	✓					
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>	✓	✓					
Plain Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum concolor</i>					✓		
Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>						✓	
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>		✓			✓		
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	✓	✓			✓		
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>						✓	
Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>						✓	
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>				✓	✓		
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>		✓		✓	✓		
Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		
White-bellied Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta leucogastra</i>				✓	✓		

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		13	14	15	16	17	18	19
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Southern Hill Myna	<i>Gracula indica</i>				✓			
Jungle Myna	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓		✓			
Chestnut-tailed Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>				✓	✓		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>						✓	
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>		✓	✓				
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>	✓						
Black-throated Munia	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>				✓			
Mammal Species	Scientific name							
Bonnet Macaque	<i>Macaca radiata</i>				✓	✓		
Nilgiri Langur	<i>Trachypithecus johnii</i>				✓	✓		
Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Herpestes vitticollis</i>					✓		
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>	✓						
Three-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennarum</i>				✓			
Malabar Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa indica</i>				✓	✓		
Indian Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>			✓				
Gaur (Indian Bison)	<i>Bos guarus</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>			✓	✓	✓		