

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



NORTHERN INDIA

Tigers, Taj Mahal, birds and wildlife.

Jan 8 to 21, 2024

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Spot-bellied eagle-owl

Alvaro's Adventures is excited to be going to India for the first time. We will be birding and mammal watching in northern India, visiting some well-known sites such as the Chambal River which is a tributary of the Ganges, Bharatpur and the Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, and Corbett National Park. The idea is to look for and see a wide variety of great birds in India, visit some spots that have nice diversity and also enjoy spectacles where the birds are found in numbers. Also of primary importance is to see a tiger, which is doable in this part of India but like anything in nature, it is not a guarantee. High, high chance though! An even higher chance is that we will see the Taj Mahal, and other cultural sites as part of this tour as we will be making a visit. There we will have a cultural guide to give us the context we need to truly understand and enjoy these sites.

The tour begins in New Delhi, and amazingly some areas not too distant from the city are really rich in birds. We will also visit areas to the south, as well as the edge of the Himalayas in Corbett National Park. Here we can find Ibisbill, and Wallcreeper, both species of rocky streams, or rocky walls found there where the mountains begin. The rest of the trip will be in the northern lowlands. For example, farther south in Ranthambore we will be looking for the tiger, as well as bird species found in dry forest

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from Crested Serpent Eagle. Bee-eaters and rollers and sunbirds. There is a lot to see, including rarer specialties, and some wonderful common species that will be photo worthy! The avian spectacle we look forward to will be in the Bharatpur sanctuary, where the wetlands are just full of waterfowl, long-legged waders as well as many land birds. This will be a great day for photography and seeing birds out in the open. We will have a boat trip on the Chambal River where we may find the Indian Skimmer, terns, waders and the unusual and narrow-snouted Gharial, a relative of the Crocodile. If luck is with us, we could find the Ganges River Dolphin.

This promises to be a fantastic nature adventure. There are many mammals we may see, and wonderful birds of course. We hope to sample some great Indian cuisine and partake in some interesting cultural visits. There is a bit of everything in this trip, and hope it is the first of many to the Indian Subcontinent.





Itinerary

- Day 1. Jan 8, 2024 - Arrival in Delhi.** Arrival at IGI airport in New Delhi. This is an arrival day; no birding will happen today. However, you may choose to arrive a day early in order to become adjusted to the new time zone before our trip begins. We can help with these extra arrangements. Transfer to a local hotel, and overnight in New Delhi.
- Day 2. Jan 9, 2024 - Delhi to Chambal.** Today we depart early in the morning to drive to Chambal (270 kms/4-5 hrs drive approximately). After arrival in Chambal we shall check in to the lodge. In the afternoon we drive about an hour to the river where our boat awaits us to take us down on the Chambal river; we will be on the boat till sunset before driving back to the Lodge. The 3-4 hour boat ride is extremely rewarding for photographing birds, crocodiles and different kinds of turtles in this stretch of the river. This stretch of the river offers the best opportunities to see the Ganges River Dolphins but they are hard to photograph. This is a good opportunity for us to find the rare Indian Skimmer. Overnight. Lodge in Chambal.
- Day 3. Jan 10, 2024 - Chambal to Agra.** Morning birding around the lodge. There is some good birdlife in the lodge grounds which includes at least 3 species of Owls and mammals like the Palm Civet, Large Grey Mongoose and Indian Hare. Later we will drive to Agra, (70 kms/ 1½ hrs drive approximately). We will check in to our hotel upon arrival. There will be some time to relax before leaving for the Taj Mahal, built by Emperor Shah Jehan to commemorate his eternal love for his wife Mumtaz. Stay on to photograph the Taj Mahal at sunset before returning to the hotel. Night in Agra.
- Day 4. Jan 11, 2024 - Agra to Bharatpur.** This is a day devoted to taking in the amazing history and architecture of this part of the world. We will leave at dark in order to visit the Taj Mahal at dawn to photograph the monument in the soft morning light. You will have plenty of time to photograph before returning to the hotel for breakfast. Some consider the Agra Fort, an even more impressive building, although not as well known. We will be able to visit the Agra Fort, built of red sandstone with a Pearl Mosque enclosed within its walls. Exquisite marble palaces with rooms of mirrored glass serve as testimony to the power and artistic sense of the Mughal emperors. Here Akbar's 300 wives and his harem of several thousand women lived. In the afternoon we will drive to Bharatpur (60

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kms/1 hr drive approx.), en route we shall stopover at Fatehpur Sikri, the city-sized fort built by Emperor Akbar as the capital of his empire in the 16th century. The city was abandoned only fifteen years after it was built due to lack of potable water and is considered one of the most perfectly preserved and complete Mughal palace cities. When we arrive at Bharatpur we will check in to the hotel. Time permitting, evening birding into Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary by cycle rickshaws accompanied by our local guide. Night in Bharatpur.

Day 5 -6. Jan 12 - 13 , 2024 - Bharatpur. We have two full days for birding in Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary on cycle rickshaws accompanied by our local guide. Night in Bharatpur.

Day 7. Jan 14, 2024 - Bharatpur to Ranthambhore. Morning drive to Ranthambhore (200 kms/4 hrs drive approx.), arriving and checking in to our lodge. After lunch we will do a game drive into the National Park by Jeep vehicle, accompanied by our local guide. Night in Ranthambhore.

Days 8 - 9. Jan 15 - 16, 2024 - Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. We have three full days in the Ranthambhore tiger reserve. We will take part in morning & evening game drives into the National Park by Jeep vehicle, accompanied by our local guide. Night in Ranthambhore.

Days 10. Jan 17, 2024 - Ranthambhore and train trip to Delhi. We will have our last morning game drive into the National Park. Later on in the morning we will transfer to the Sawai Madhopur station (10-minute drive) to board the train for Delhi. We will be on the comfortable Golden Temple express, which is much faster than driving to Delhi, it takes approximately 6 hours. On arrival in Delhi we will transfer to our hotel and will check in. Night in Delhi.

Day 11. Jan 18, 2024 - Delhi to Corbett. This morning we will drive to the wonderful Corbett National Park (275 kms/5 hrs drive approx.). We will check in to our lodge before continuing with afternoon birding. After lunch we will be birding at Kumeria, Mohan and adjoining areas for Brown Dipper, Little & Spotted Forktail, Crested Kingfisher, Wallcreeper & the Ibisbill. The broad-leafed forested hills may reveal the Great Slaty Woodpecker, Long-Billed Thrush, Rufous-Bellied Niltava and Long-tailed Broadbill. Overnight in Corbett.

Day 12. Jan 19, 2024 - Corbett Tiger Reserve (Dhikala). Early morning, we will enter through Dhangari gate for Dhikala zone en route stopping at advantage points for wildlife viewing. Upon arrival in Dhikala we will check in to the Forest Rest

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House. Later we go into the vast Dhikala savanna along the forest edge, a good place to sight Asian elephants and look for Tigers in 4-wheel drives vehicles. While we are on the lookout for Tigers, we may encounter birds like Black & Grey Francolin, Rain & Jungle Bush Quail, Small & Barred Buttonquail, Red Spurfowl, Emerald Dove to name a few. Overnight at Forest Rest House in Dhikala zone. **** Please note that the accommodation at Dhikala is basic, but the quality of wildlife viewing it offers is unmatched. *****

Day 13. Jan 20, 2024 - Corbett Tiger Reserve (Dhikala). We will do a morning game drive into the surrounding forest. After Breakfast we leave for the Ramganga reservoir. Completed in 1974 the present area of this lake is about 80 sq km. Packed with fish, Muggar and the fish-eating Gharial Crocodile thrive here as do Pallas's Fish Eagle, White-Tailed Eagle, Grey-Headed & Lesser Fish Eagle and the Osprey. In the Dhikala complex itself one could spot the Indian, Savanna or Grey Nightjar. Overnight at Forest Rest House in Dhikala zone.

Day 14. Jan 21, 2024 - Corbett to Delhi. Morning drive to exit the park gate with wildlife viewing opportunities on the way. Later we shall drive to Delhi. We will arrive Delhi and transfer to the international airport to board the flight for onward destination, or to the airport hotel for those who require an extra night before a morning flight. Some flights leave at night after midnight for Europe, and then on to North America. We can arrange for additional accommodation if you require it.

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About the Physical Requirements & Pace

This is a tour with the objectives of seeing the special birds of northern India, as well as to enjoy its culture, and wildlife with a great hope of seeing tiger along the way. The tour is structured in a relaxed to moderate pace. Nevertheless we expect to be out in the field early, sometimes with a post lunch break, and then more field time in the afternoon. Where we can bird outside of the vehicles, we will be walking much of the day, but given that we walk at a birder's pace, this may mean walking for a maximum of 2-3 miles in a day. Still, being on one's feet for much of the day is exhilarating for some, taxing for others. Some folks may want to take a stool to sit down while we wait for a bird or critter to come out of the bushes.

In Ranthambore and Corbett there are tigers present, we cannot bird on foot. Transportation varies from open safari type trucks to smaller open jeeps. We will not be able to have our entire group in one vehicle, but there will be a guide with you to point out birds and wildlife no matter which vehicle you are in. Transportation will vary widely on this tour, from air-conditioned tourist bus, to air-conditioned public train. We will be

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birding at one spot on bicycle-rickshaw, and we will be birding from boat on the Chambal river.

Note that northern India in winter is not always hot. Weather can be cool in the mornings, and perhaps even cold at times. Layers will be necessary for this trip. The accommodations are comfortable, and we will want to try local cuisine. We will be staying in well appointed, comfortable lodging, of a higher level than the average when that is available. However, our guest house in Dhikala is more on the basic side, although it offers unprecedented birding and wildlife opportunities. Note also that we will have a train ride during this tour, in a comfortable coach, and a quicker travel time than it would take to drive back to Delhi on the 11th day of the trip.

Your Guides

Alvaro Jaramillo was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior. Research forays and backpacking trips introduced Alvaro to the riches of the



Neotropics, where he has traveled extensively. He is the author of the Birds of Chile, an authoritative yet portable field guide to Chile's birds. In 2016 he published the ABA Field Guide to the birds of California. Alvaro writes the Identify Yourself column in Bird Watcher's Digest. Alvaro recently wrote a large part of the sparrow chapter for the Handbook of Birds of the World and is writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia. He was recently granted the Eisenmann Medal by

the Linnaean Society of New York, it is awarded occasionally for excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur. Alvaro lives with his family in Half Moon Bay, California.

Ansar Khan – Ansar grew up in Keoladeo National Park, a known paradise for ornithologists and photographers that inspired his interest in Nature and birds. He is keen observer and has a meaningful knowledge of the varied bird life in India. Ansar has travelled the length and breadth of India as a Naturalist and bird guide. He owes his interest and his expertise on the subject to the guidance of his father who was in the Forest Department. The knowledge and experience he has gained has been since childhood. Ansar is considered to be amongst the best birders in India and consults and guides for many international tour groups and companies. He is also active with Life Line



for Nature Society, a Bharatpur-based nonprofit working towards the welfare and conservation and wildlife and nature.

Financial Information

FEE: \$7600 from New Delhi.

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Sep. 8, 2023

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1550

LIMIT: 14. Minimum 8.

Additional Information

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter India. Two blank pages are necessary for entry to India. All visitors to India require a tourist visa, this can be an eVisa which you can apply to online. <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Indian consulate nearest you for entry requirements.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in New Delhi by Jan 8, 2024. Flights back home at the end of the tour can be booked out of New Delhi at night on Jan 21, 2024 or later. If you require extra nights at the New Delhi hotel, we can arrange this for you. There are other options that can be booked which are less expensive. Be sure to check with Alvaro's Adventures to confirm that the flights you have chosen will work with our itinerary and to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. We are not responsible for these fees.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$7600 for one person in double occupancy from New Delhi. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 14. All meals from Dinner in New Delhi on Day 1 through lunch on Day 15 are included. Otherwise

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also included are all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. Alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature are not included. The above fees do not include your airfare to and from New Delhi, airport taxes, visa fees, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is \$1550. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$500** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit and the Release and Indemnity form must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by Sep 8, 2023. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by Alvaro's Adventures.

SMOKING: This is a non-smoking tour.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Alvaro's Adventures for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

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Alvaro's Adventures is a Registered Seller of Travel in the State of California (CST # 2105497). Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. This ensures your right to a prompt refund: Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where the passenger is not at fault and has not canceled in violation of any terms and conditions previously clearly and conspicuously disclosed and agreed to by the passenger, all sums paid to the seller of travel for services not provided will be promptly paid to the passenger, unless the passenger advises the seller of travel in writing, after cancellation. This provision does not apply where the seller of travel has remitted the payment to another registered wholesale seller of travel or a carrier, without obtaining a refund, and where the wholesaler or provider defaults in providing the agreed-upon transportation or service. In this situation, the seller of travel must provide the passenger with a written statement accompanied by bank records establishing the disbursement of the payment, and if disbursed to a wholesale seller of travel, proof of current registration of that wholesaler.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Alvaro's Adventures, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the

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reverse side of the registration form. Alvaro's Adventures acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Alvaro's Adventures accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, and other pertinent matter provided by Alvaro's Adventures. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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