



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

India

Andaman Islands Budget

1st October to 6th October 2024 (6 days)



White-headed Starling by David Hoddinott

Our tour to the Andaman Islands will see us flying across the Bay of Bengal to Port Blair, Andaman Islands. Located some 1,100 kilometres to the east of peninsula India, this archipelago is far closer to southern Myanmar and Sumatra. Consequently, the many endemic species present have more in common with the Malaysian sub-region than with the Indian sub-continent. The archipelago is made up of 200 or so small islands with patches of pristine tropical rainforest and palm-fringed sandy beaches! Based in a single location for the duration of our time on the islands, this is a relaxed and easy birding destination.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

ANDAMAN ISLANDS EXTENSION

Day 1	Arrival in Port Blair, Andaman Islands
Days 2 to 5	Birding Mount Harriet, Chidiyatapu, Shoal Bay, Sippighat, Ograbranj, Ferrargunj and Port Blair area
Day 6	Port Blair and depart

TOUR ROUTE MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...



Andaman Serpent Eagle
by David Hoddinott

Day 1: Arrival in Port Blair, Andaman Islands. Today is set aside as an arrival day into Port Blair, the capital city of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Located at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, these two island groups are politically part of India. Possibly formed due to the subduction of the Indian tectonic plate below the South-east Asian Plate, the islands at one point may have provided a contiguous land route between Myanmar and Indonesia. They also play host to a veritable treasure trove of endemic wildlife, with most having stronger affinities with the Malaysian sub-region than that of the Indian sub-continent. One of the islands is also home to the Sentinelese (the only known surviving Palaeolithic people). Despite a number of contact attempts in the 20th century, the locals have reacted only with hostility. As such, they have had very little contact with outsiders. From what is known by distant observation, the Sentinelese maintain an essentially hunter-gatherer existence with no evidence of agricultural practices or even the use of fire.

After arriving in Port Blair, we will transfer to our very comfortable hotel for the next 5 nights. We may have some time this afternoon for some initial exploration of

Chidiyatapu.

Days 2 to 5: Birding Mount Harriet, Chidiyatapu, Shoal Bay, Sippighat, Ograbranj, Ferrargunj and Port Blair area. We have four full days to explore these rarely-birded islands. Much of the Andamans are still covered in pristine forest and we will concentrate much of our time inside the forests during our time here. We will also make excursions to the mudflats and mangroves for waders and other coastal species. We will devote most of our time to Mount Harriet and Chidiyatapu, both areas boasting their own important endemics. Mount Harriet generally produces a number of mixed species flocks containing Andaman and Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, White-headed Starling, Andaman Treepie, Freckle-breasted Woodpecker, the eye-searing Scarlet Minivet, Andaman Flowerpecker, Black-naped Monarch and Andaman Cuckooshrike.



Andaman Crake by David Hoddinott

Alarm calls may give away the location of the highly attractive Violet Cuckoo or rare





Andaman Woodpecker by David Hoddinott

Andaman Serpent Eagle. We must also pay very close attention to disturbances in the leaf litter where Forest Wagtail is common and both the cryptic Orange-headed Thrush and the mega Andaman Crake are also known to occur. We will also spend some late afternoons here trying to catch sight of two of the more difficult denizens; Andaman Cuckoo-Dove and Andaman Wood Pigeon as they return to their roost sites.

The forest patches around Chidiyatapu provide steady forest birding, and perhaps our only chance to find the elusive and rarely seen Andaman Crake – though this would be considered a major bonus should we be so lucky. Aside from the near-mythical crake, we will see many of the commoner endemics here with Andaman Coucal and Andaman Woodpecker being particularly evident. Psittacids are well represented with Vernal Hanging Parrot rather commonly seen alongside three species of *Psittacula* parakeets; Alexandrine, Red-breasted and Long-tailed. Andaman Shama, Andaman Bulbul and White-headed Starling make up the remaining endemics

in this forest. We will also be keeping a keen eye overhead for Edible-nest and White-bellied Swiftlets and the much larger Brown Needletail.

The coastal mudflats are of interest for many wader species. Birding the flats will no doubt cause some interest from the local people who are always keen to find out just what it is that we are so interested in. While explaining the finer aspects of birdwatching, we will pan through the commoner waders looking for such interesting species as Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Terek Sandpiper, Great Knot, Little Tern and possibly White-bellied Sea Eagle overhead. Moving to mangrove margins should elicit Mangrove Whistler, Collared Kingfisher and Watercock, while we also stand good chances of finding Andaman Teal, Cinnamon and Yellow Bitterns, Dusky, Clamorous Reed, Blyth's Reed, Black-browed and Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers, and possibly Ruddy-breasted Crake or Slaty-breasted Rail. Commoner species along the littoral zone include the recently split Grey-headed Swamphen, Chinese Pond Heron, Pacific Golden Plover, Long-toed Stint and Stork-billed Kingfisher.

Night birding here is a must, with a bevy of endemic species that include Andaman Masked Owl, Andaman Scops Owl, Hume's and Andaman Hawk-Owl, Andaman Nightjar as well as the *modestus* sub-species of Oriental Scops Owl, which is liable to be split in the future (Walden's Scops Owl).



Andaman Bulbul by David Hoddinott



Day 6: Port Blair and depart. After breakfast, we'll head to the airport in Port Blair where the tour will conclude.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 6;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings during the tour;
- All ground transportation;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees and
- All local guiding services.

This excludes:

- ANY flights;
- Visa fees;
- Any drinks;
- Tips for local guides and services
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.
- Camera fees.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation.

Please note: Our Andaman Island hotel does not have twin share rooms available. Occupancy is either for couples in double beds, or single accommodation.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour.



Please Note

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Fitness: The Andaman tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health and reasonably fit as most of the birding will be done on foot, and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Accommodation is very comfortable.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The Andaman tour will depart from Port Blair Airport on day 1, and conclude at Port Blair Airport after breakfast on day 6.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Veer Savarkar International Airport also known as Port Blair Airport (IATA: IXZ) is the main port of entry for those beginning their travels with the Andaman Islands and is most easily reached via Chennai International Airport (IATA: MAA). **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

