



WILDLIFE & NATURAL HISTORY TOURS

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Asiatic Lions & Desert and Palearctic Birds, Gujarat

Encompassing dry forests and semi-arid grasslands in its southern peninsula, thorn forest, arid grasslands and the salt-encrusted plains of the Rann of Kutch in its northern peninsula and wetlands along the Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat is a paradise for naturalists. For birders there are over 500 species to find, including superb birds like the Indian Bustard, Grey Hypocolius and Crab Plover. The desert like habitats within and surrounding the Rann of Kutch are excellent for several of the arid zone birds of the Palearctic, some of them difficult to find elsewhere in their range (several Larks, Red-tailed Wheatear, Desert Warbler, MacQueen's Bustard, Cream-coloured Courser, Sociable Lapwing, Rufous-fronted Prinia, Short-eared Owl and Syke's Nightjar among others). Many of the mammal highlights of India's arid northwest are found in Gujarat, sometimes exclusively, including the last remaining population of Asiatic Lions and rarities like Indian Wolf, Desert Cat, Striped Hyena, Caracal, Pallid Hedgehog, Desert Fox, Blackbuck, Indian Gazelle and Indian Desert Jird. Landscapes formed by volcanic activity and sculpted by flowing water, have left behind stunning scenery of bizzare rock formations, especially adjoining the vast, barren salt-flats of the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat's northern peninsula.

Dates

TBA

Please note that we can customise schedule for independent and small group travel

Costs (per person)

TBA

Please note that these scheduled trips are based on a budget travel option. This trip can be customised for better comfort levels for independent travel

Price Inclusions

Transfers and Transport, ex-Ahmedabad

Accommodation

Food

Naturalist cum Tour Leader



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Local Guide
Entrance Fees
Safaris/activities

Itinerary Outline

Day 1, 2 & 3: Gir National Park (AM Transfer from Ahmedabad, Gujarat)

Day 4 & 5: Blackbuck National Park, Velavadar

Day 6, 7 & 8: Little Rann of Kutch

Day 9, 10, 11, 12: Great Rann of Kutch

Day 13: O/N train from Bhuj to Ahmedabad

Facilities

Accommodation: Comfortable accommodation in a quaint resorts and homestays, with local flavour

Food: Largely local vegetarian

Transport: Road transfers in MUV's and Train Transfer in Upper Class A/C

Difficulty level: Easy

Best Time to Visit

Early November to End of February

For Whom

Birdwatchers, Wildlife Enthusiasts, Bird & Landscape Photographers

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1, 2 & 3, Gir National Park: We depart from Ahmedabad in the morning and arrive in Gir National Park for lunch. We spend the next 3 days exploring the dry deciduous forests of Gir for Asiatic Lions, other mammals and birds that are typical of Peninsular India.



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Gir is most famous as the last refuge of Asiatic Lions in the world and these majestic animals are typically easily seen in the Park's tourism zone. Other interesting mammals found here include a visible population of Leopard, and its dry forests include species like the Four-horned Antelope and Striped Hyena that are typically difficult to see in wetter forests of Peninsular India. For birders, Gir's approx 300 birds provides the only opportunity to find species from the wetter forests in Peninsular India, among dry habitat specialists, that are typical on this trip.

Day 4 & 5, Blackbuck National Park, Velavadar: We leave Gir after morning activity and breakfast on Day 4 and reach Velavadar early in the evening. We spend 2 days exploring these tropical grasslands for among India's rarest predators, the Indian Wolf, its main prey, Blackbuck, and a number of birds.

Velavadar's tropical grasslands provide a safe haven for large herds of Blackbuck - a patchily distributed antelope, in the dwindling grasslands of India. Velavadar is also among the best places to see Indian Wolf as well as providing reasonable chances for another rarity, the Striped Hyena. Jungle Cat and Indian Fox are the other mammalian highlights from Velavadar. Velavadar hosts a large mixed roost of Eurasian Marsh, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers and the rare Stolickza's Bushchat. Although rarely seen outside of the Monsoon, the grasslands are one of the few remaining strongholds of a breeding population of Lesser Florican.

Day 6, 7 & 8, Little Rann of Kutch: We leave Velavadar after morning activity and breakfast on day 6 and reach Little Rann early in the evening. We spend the next 3 days exploring the barren salt-flats, sparsely vegetated uplands and wetlands here primarily for its fantastic birdlife, unique desert wildlife and superb scenery.

The Little Rann of Kutch is the southeastern extent of the vast area, covering tens of thousands of Kilometres, of barren salt-flats in north Gujarat. For birders this part of the Rann is especially known for sightings of the shy MacQueen's Bustard which winter here, more than ten species of Larks, including rarities like the greater Hoopoe Lark, Syke's Nightjar, Short-eared and Pallid-scops Owls, Cream-coloured and Indian Coursers, Sociable Lapwing and thousands of wetland birds, many of which migrate here from various parts of the Palearctic during winter. This is also prime raptor country which include large numbers of harriers and *Aquila* eagles as well as rarities like Red-necked Falcon. Much of the Little Rann is the Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary and is the best place to observe and photograph these animals. Other mammals include potential sightings of both Indian and Desert Foxes and Jungle Cat. During our short visit to the Little Rann we enter its vast salt-flats, providing opportunities to experience its striking openness at various times of the day.



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Day 9, 10, 11 & 12, Great Rann of Kutch: We leave Little Rann after our morning activity on Day 9 and reach our base near the Great Rann by evening. We spend the next 4 days exploring the diverse habitats around the Great Rann for its astonishing birdlife, unique desert wildlife and stunning landscapes.

Much of our effort will be concentrated in the sedge and halophyte (salt-resistant plants) dominated Banni Grasslands, on the southern edge of the Great Rann's salt flats - the key site for natural history experiences in all of the Rann. Here it is possible to find Grey Hypocolius in a well known roosting site, Stolickza's Bushchat, Desert Warbler and Red-tailed Wheatear as well as the impressive birds of the Little Rann (please see above). Tens of thousands of Common Crane Crane winter here, along with large numbers of raptors. Further south, thorn forests hold more rarities, including White-naped Tit, Marshall's Iora, Rufous-fronted Prinia and White-bellied Minivet. Our visit to the coast, on the Gulf of Kutch, is likely to be productive for Crab Plover, in among the regular winter sites for these unique shorebirds. The highly endangered Indian Bustard is possible in the Naliya Grasslands, in a sanctuary created to protect a breeding population of these majestic birds. There are some excellent mammals to be found in the grasslands and thorn forests including, with luck, Desert Cat, Indian Wolf and Striped Hyena. Jungle Cat, Indian Gazelle and Indian and Desert Foxes are relatively common, while Caracal are extremely rare. Other faunal highlights include intriguing animals like the Desert Jird and Spiny-tailed Lizard (rarely seen in peak winter). Multi-hued, bizarrely shaped rock formations, dark hills strewn with marine fossils and stark, sparsely vegetated landscapes on the edge of the Rann - visual splendours that will accompany us during our visit here - are reflective of complex geological and hydrological history of the region.

Day 13, O/N train to Ahmedabad: After half a day of activity on Day 13, we board an overnight train to Ahmedabad. AM arrival in Ahmedabad on Day 14

FYI and Guidelines

1. Gujarat is politically stable, safe to travel in and generally crime free.
2. Expect cold nights and early mornings, typically below 10 Celcius (especially in the Rann), necessitating woolens, including protection for the head and hands for morning excursions. Days will be warm, pleasant and dry.
3. Typically birds and animals on this trip will be seen at distances where binoculars or ideally spotting scopes are essential for observing them.
4. It is best to wear earthy colored clothing to blend into the environment.
5. A hat and sunblock are highly recommended and sunglasses will be useful.
6. Please bring essential medication with you, since the local outlets will not always carry what you are looking for. Do check with your doctor on medication and medical safety before you travel to the region.



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Terms and Conditions

1. Maximum group size for these tours is 6.
2. Tour costs are per person based on twin sharing basis ex-Ahmedabad and is all inclusive (transport, accommodation, food, personnel and all taxes and fees). Personnel includes an experienced bird guide/tour leader and resource persons locally. Alcoholic beverages, porter charges, laundry and ala carte snacks are extra. Please check with us on specific items are included in the published tour costs.
3. Bookings are confirmed only upon full payment of the tour cost and at least one month in advance from the proposed departure date
4. Our preferred mode of payment is through electronic transfers into our bank account. Relevant details will be provided to you once you are ready to make the payment. Alternatively we accept demand drafts/cheques in the currency of your choice.
5. If you are paying in foreign currency, we might have apply a currency surcharge on the published rates, if the INR appreciates against your currency at the time of payment.
6. In the unlikely event in which we are forced to cancel the tour we will refund you the entire booking amount. In case we are unable to conduct the tour due to circumstances beyond our control (for e.g. forces of nature, political conditions), we will make every effort to refund as much of the booking amount as possible.
7. In case you to cancel your booking more than one month in advance from the tour date, we will refund *at least* 50% of the tour cost (assuming tour costs are fully paid). The precise refund beyond this will be dependent on the refund policies of our travel partners that we use on tour. In case you cancel your booking less than 1 month from the start of the tour, we will refund 10% of your booking amount

Disclaimer and Emergency Contact

Participants should be aware of unlikely, but potential risks involved during wildlife tours and general travel. This may include, among other things, injuries or fatalities associated with general travel, snake bites, field activities and encounters with wildlife. We require that all tour participants sign this disclaimer that acknowledges the risks associated during our conducted tours and relieves us of any liabilities arising out of the same. This also acknowledges that you have read and abide by the terms and conditions mentioned in the document.

Name of participant:

Age:

Emergency contact person:



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Relationship:

Tel no:

Email:

Signature and Date: