



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

# **EASTERN INDIA: HIMALAYAS TO FLOOD PLAINS OF BRAHMAPUTRA**

Jan 4 – 20, 2026



*Eastern Himalayan Range - One of the great natural wonders of the world.*

**Northeast India is renowned for its rich culture, stunning Himalayan landscapes, and incredible wildlife. Once a hidden gem, this area is now recognized as one of the most breathtaking and biologically diverse regions on Earth.**

**Historically difficult to access, Northeast India has begun to attract the attention of birders and wildlife enthusiasts worldwide, especially as travel restrictions ease. Despite its growing popularity, it remains one of the last unspoiled regions, distinct in both culture and biodiversity from the rest of India.**

**VENT is excited to introduce, for the first time, a tour focused on this remarkable destination. Our journey begins in the mountains near the Nepalese border, offering panoramic views of the Eastern Himalayan Range. Here, we will search for the elusive Red Panda, alongside a tantalizing array of**

localized high-altitude birds, including Pheasants, Tragopans, Parrotbills, Wren-Babblers, and Laughingthrushes—representing some of the most sought-after varieties in Asia.

As we travel along the Assam valley, following the mighty Brahmaputra River, we will explore three premier national parks in the region: Manas, Kaziranga, and Nameri. These parks not only boast incredible birdlife, such as the Bengal Florican and Greater Adjutant, but also showcase exceptional mammals. Kaziranga, in particular, is home to the largest population of Great One-Horned Rhinoceros and the highest density of Tigers found anywhere in the world.

This 16-day tour offers an ideal introduction to the remote northeastern region, featuring a stunning variety of habitats—from lush mountain forests to expansive grassy plains—teeming with endemic birds and mammals. Join us for an unforgettable adventure, delivered in true VENT style, complete with top-rated accommodations, comfortable transportation, and exceptional dining experiences.

**January 4, Day 1: International Flight to New Delhi.** Most flights from the United States connect with flights bound for New Delhi that typically arrive late in the evening. If time permits, we suggest arriving a day early to allow for potential flight delays and to be well rested. VENT will be happy to assist with additional lodging arrangements and transfers should you choose to arrive prior to January 5.

NIGHT: Aboard aircraft in transit to New Delhi

**January 5, Day 2: Arrive in New Delhi.** Upon arriving at New Delhi's Indira Ghandi International Airport (airport code DEL), you will be met by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to our comfortable hotel. That evening we will gather as a group with our leader for dinner, introductions, and a tour briefing.

NIGHT: Pullman New Delhi Aerocity, New Delhi

**January 6, Day 3: Fly to Bagdogra, drive Maneybhajang.** A morning flight to Bagdora, a small but busy airport in the Himalayan foothills in the state of West Bengal. Bagdogra itself a scenic hill station surrounded in lush green tea plantations, set against an epic backdrop of the Himalayan Range. This is our gateway to North-East India.

From here it is 3.5-hour drive to Maneybhajang. This, a small transit-town on the Indo-Nepal border, in the Darjeeling district, 2000 meters above sea-level is servicing the popular foreign tourist and trekking community. It also (importantly) provides access to Singalila National Park, best known for its vibrant Rhododendron Valley and breathtaking 360-degree panorama of the Greater Himalayan Range, which includes views of the highest mountain peaks of the world, Mt Everest and Mt Kanchenjunga.

We have three nights in Maneybhajang, staying at the Shikhar Tarry Lodge, a simple but cosy and well-appointed hamlet. Be aware, this being the northern hemisphere winter period we can expect much cooler conditions. Nighttime temperatures can drop below freezing and snowfall is even possible.

NIGHT: Shikhar Tarry Lodge, Mane Bhanjang



*The unmistakable Red Panda [photo: Ansar Khan]*

**January 7-8, Day 4 & 5: Singalila National Park.** We have two full days to explore the rugged Himalayan landscapes of Singalila National Park and the surrounding forests. This is one of the best places in India to see the elusive Red Panda, a charismatic and endangered raccoon-like mammal confined to the eastern Himalayas and Southwest China, and we intend to put some effort into this! Apart from the Red Panda, other mammals we may encounter are Himalayan Black bear, Clouded Leopard, Leopard, Leopard Cat, Himalayan Serow, Barking Deer, Yellow-throated Marten, Wild Boar and Chinese Pangolin.

This also a Birding Paradise. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded here, including many of the highly specialised and sought-after Himalayan endemics. The unbelievable Satyr Tragopan is a key target for any visiting birder. Blood Pheasant and Kalij Pheasant are also on the list. In addition, there is a wonderful array of Woodpeckers, Magpies, Warblers, Fulvettas, Parrotbills, Yuhinas, Wren-Babblers, Scimitar Babblers, Laughingthrushes, Minlas, Forktails, Bush Robins, Redstarts, Sunbirds and Accentors (amongst many others) to keep us occupied.

We should also have the opportunity to visit some of the most spectacular viewpoints. Sandakhphu is situated within Singalila National Park and is the highest peak in West Bengal. Sandakhphu offers the best view of Kangchenjunga, also known as Sleeping Buddha or Sleeping Shiva.

NIGHT: Shikhar Tarry Lodge, Mane Bhanjang



*Satyr Tragopan rank among the best of the Himalayan Pheasants [photo: Ansar Khan]*

**January 9, Day 6: Drive to Siliguri (Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary).** We can enjoy a more relaxed morning with some local birding, before our departure for Siliguri. This a regional centre situated on bank of the Mahananda river, at a lower elevation. The 3-hour drive will be a slow and (at times) winding descent, also revealing many special montane and rural landscapes along the way.

An afternoon visit to Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in Siliguri will provide some different habitat, and hopefully, some different birds. Asian Barred Owlet, Collared Falconet, Green-billed Malkoha, Blue-throated Barbet, Maroon Oriole, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush and Great Hornbill are known to frequent this location.

NIGHT: Mayfair Tea Resort, Siliguri



Greater Adjutant at Dheepor Beel [photo: Scott Baker]

**January 10, Day 7: Flight to Guwahati, – drive to Manas National Park.** This is primarily a day of travel. After breakfast we drive to the local airport for a flight eastward to Guwahati, capital of Assam and largest city in NE India. Here we enter the Brahmaputra Valley. If time permits a quick stop at the famous Guhuwati tip & Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary would be considered, this being a good chance to observe India's rarest Stork, the prehistoric looking Greater Adjutant.

From Guhuwati it is a 3.5-hour drive to Manas National Park.

Upon arrival we check in to our accommodation at the Musa Jungle Retreat. Featuring very comfortable lodging and modern amenities set on a large property close to the park entrance. Our base for the next 3 nights.

NIGHT: Musa Jungle Retreat, Manus





*Bengal Tiger [photo: Ansar Khan]*

**January 11-12, Days 8 & 9: Manas National Park** We have two full days to explore the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Manas National Park. This is a fascinating reserve and a biodiversity hotspot in the Himalayan foothills that borders Bhutan and home to significant populations of several endangered species. These include Bengal Tiger, Asian Elephant, One-horned Rhinoceros, and the Golden Langur – a prized primate whose rumoured existence was only confirmed by western science in 1953. Manas also boasts the only known population of the critically endangered Pygmy Hog.

In addition, the diverse habitats are home to an extraordinary array of birdlife with nearly 450 species recorded. A particular focus for ourselves will be the extensive grassland areas, which rank among the best places in the world to observe the critically endangered Bengal Florican. The grasslands also support a variety of other species to watch for, including Pied Harrier, White-eyed Buzzard, Black & Swamp Francolin, Chestnut-capped Babbler, Finn's Weaver, Bengal Bush Lark, Hodgson's Bush Chat, Black-breasted Parrotbill, and Indian (Rufous-rumped) Grassbird.

NIGHTS: Musa Jungle Retreat, Manus

The surrounding forest has equally good birding, with Wreathed, Oriental Pied and Great Hornbills, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Orange-breasted, Pin-tailed and Ashy-headed Green Pigeons, Barred Cuckoo-dove, Green billed Malkoha, Collared Falconet, Red-headed Trogon, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Lineated Barbet, Long-tailed and Silver-breasted Broadbills, Crested Kingfisher, Assam, Greater Necklaced and Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes, Scaly Thrush, Sultan Tit, Slaty-backed Forktail, Yellow-vented Flowerpecker and Chestnut-eared Bunting some of the possibilities.

NIGHTS: Musa Jungle Retreat, Manus



*Manas National Park is one of the best places to see the critically endangered Bengal Florican [photo Ansar Khan]*

**January 13, Day 10: Drive to Nameri National Park.** Another day of travel. Following breakfast, we have a 7- hour (250 km) drive to Nameri National Park. Upon arrival checking into the lodge and if time permits some local birding.

NIGHT: Nameri Eco Camp, Nameri National Park

**January 14, Day 11: Nameri National Park.** Nameri National Park is a Tiger Reserve that straddles the eastern border of Assam, bisected by the Kameng River, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra. The tropical forests, grasslands and rich riparian zone provide a vast and continuous habitat with the Pakke Tiger Reserve to the north. This area regarded by many as the most scenic in all of Assam.

An early morning trek into the National Park is our best chance to observe the very rare and secretive White-winged Duck – a previously widespread species that has suffered catastrophic decline in recent decades. Nameri National Park is one of the few forest reserves that permits foot traffic, but, under strict conditions (and with an armed guard). Certainly, a huge advantage from a bird-watching perspective!

Later we can enjoy a relaxing boat ride on the Bhoroli River. There is scope here for raptors, Barbets, Hornbills, Pigeons and many forest varieties – the list is extensive. With some luck (and some local gen) there is also possibility for Ibisbill. An altitudinal migrant and a regular winter visitor to these parts.

And after lunch will be a casual afternoon with no scheduled activity. There will instead be opportunity to visit the local village or bird the grounds at your leisure.

NIGHT: Nameri Eco Camp, Nameri National Park

**January 15, Day 12: Drive to Kaziranga National Park.** Today we travel to Kaziranga National Park. First up however to enjoy a relaxed morning period including breakfast and some local birding (to be determined).

After packing, we depart on a 2-hour drive (approximately 100 km), leaving the hill country, crossing the Brahmaputra River, and arriving at the luxurious Diphlu River Lodge in time for lunch. Perched on the

edge of Kaziranga National Park, this exceptional lodge features luxury cottages with stunning views of the river and surrounding jungle. Widely regarded as one of the finest safari lodges in India, Diphlu River Lodge gained recognition in 2016 when it hosted the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge - this is where the Royals stay when visiting Kaziranga!

We have three nights to enjoy the natural setting and wonderful hospitality this venue has to offer.

NIGHT: Diphlu River Lodge, Kaziranga National Park



*Figure 1 One-horned Rhinoceros a good chance at Kaziranga National Park [photo: Scott Baker]*

**January 16-17, Days 13 & 14: Kaziranga National Park.** Kaziranga is THE premier National Park of Assam. A popular destination and a UNESCO World Heritage listed site, best known for the largest population of One-horned Rhinoceros and the highest density of Tigers, anywhere in the world. It also offers unforgettable close-up encounters with species such as Asian Elephant and Swamp Deer and some incredible birdlife.

The park represents the largest undisturbed area of the Brahmaputra floodplain, featuring a mosaic of low-lying grasslands and lagoons, and patches of woodland. We have 2 full days to be spend in and around the National Park. Access is strictly controlled and will involve morning and afternoon jeep safaris, with armed forest guards.



Kaziranga is divided into three ranges, eastern, western and central. The central range is usually the best place to see One-horned Rhinoceros, Wild Water Buffalo, Asian Elephant, and Swamp Deer. The eastern range offers some of the most exciting and varied wildlife watching, with a possibility of seeing Otters (several species occur here) and, with luck, a Tiger. A great variety of waterfowl will be present at Sohola Bheel. The full range of northern hemisphere Ducks can be expected along with various Geese, Spot-billed & Great-white Pelican, Greater & Lesser Adjutant, Swamp Francolin, River Lapwing, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, various Shorebirds, Storks, Egrets, etc. This also a good site for White-rumped & Slender-billed Vulture, Pallas's Fish-Eagle, Grey-headed Fish-Eagle and a stunning array of Parakeets, Kingfishers and Woodpeckers. There is also the possibility of some rarer varieties like Blue-naped Pitta and Bengal Florican, if still required.

NIGHTS: Diphlu River Lodge, Kaziranga National Park

**January 18, Day 15: Drive to Jorhat.** After breakfast it is a 2.5-hour drive to Jorhat (120 km). On arrival check in to the lodge, followed by lunch.

The afternoon will be spent at the Hoollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, a reserve established in 1881 to protect the endangered Western Hoolock Gibbon. The evergreen forest also provides habitat for several other primate species including Northern Pig-tailed, Stump-tailed, Rhesus & Assam Macaque, Capped Lutung and Bengal Slow Loris. There are of course some birds of interest. Kalij Pheasant, Crested Goshawk, Asian Barred Owlet, Red-headed Trogon, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, White-throated Bulbul, Grey-bellied Tesia, Pale-chinned Flycatcher and Ruby-cheeked Sunbird, some of the likely options.

NIGHT: Thengel Manor, Jorhat

**January 19, Day 16: Jorhat – Delhi.** This morning, we transfer to Jorhat airport for our return flight to Delhi (via Guwahati). Arrive Delhi and check-in at the hotel. This essentially concludes the tour. We can look forward to a group dinner and sharing some of the highlights prior to departure, depending on the flight schedules.

NIGHT: Pullman New Delhi Aerocity, New Delhi

**January 20, Day 17: Delhi – Departure.** After breakfast, making individual arrangements for transfer to the airport for onward flight home or to the next destination.



**TOUR LIMIT:** This tour is limited to 8 participants.

**TOUR LEADER:** Scott Baker with the assistance of a local guide.



**Scott Baker's** interest in wildlife began early on while growing up in the leafy, outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne which, although a highly urbanized environment, retained significant tracts of remnant natural woodland. It was here at the age of 11 that he got his first pair of binoculars and began what was to become a lifetime quest to identify all the birds in an ever-expanding neighborhood. By the age of 15 he was running weekly bird walks and talks and became a founding member of the very successful Yarran Dheran Junior Field Naturalists Club. In 1988 he was named the Nunawading Young Citizen of the Year in recognition of his

contribution to natural history and conservation. Pursuing mutual interests in life science and fine art, Scott went on to hold various roles in business, education, and environmental consultancy. This has facilitated opportunities to explore the wild places and wildlife of Australia and beyond. In 30 plus years he has traveled extensively throughout the continent with a major focus on birds. He loves the rare and sometimes challenging, cryptic varieties but also shorebirds and seabirds, having spent many days at sea. To date he has recorded (and photographed) almost all of the regular and resident land birds and pelagic species likely in the country. Scott has a passion for wildlife, not just birds, and conducts studies and regular surveys for mammals, reptiles, and frogs. His fieldwork will often involve additional nocturnal spotlighting sessions, requiring late nights and early mornings to maximize the “tetrapod” options, when possible. Scott is a well-regarded member of the Australian birding community, a moderator on several birdwatching forums and rare bird committees, and, since 2017, has run birdwatching and nature tours within Australia and parts of southeast Asia. He currently resides in Victoria but frequently interstate or abroad.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$11,995** per person in double occupancy and includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 17, accommodations as stated, ground transportation during the tour, internal India flights, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee does not include roundtrip airfare from your home to New Delhi, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,395**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (June 8, 2025). We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits. If you choose not to register online, you may pay your deposit by credit card, check, money order, or bank transfer. If not paying online, or by card, your tour space will be held for 10 days pending receipt of your deposit.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (August 7, 2025) prior to the tour departure date.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

#### **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:**

##### **Cancellation by Participant:**

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of \$500 per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

##### If participant cancels:

210 days or more before departure date

209 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

##### Participant's refund will be:

Your deposit(s) minus \$500\*

No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

### **Cancellation by VENT:**

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION:** To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

### **About Ripcord**

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.\*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit:

<https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

\*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

### **About MedjetAssist**

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company's primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees



apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.\* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

\*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

**BAGGAGE:** The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

**MEALS & ACCOMMODATIONS:** We will stay in the best accommodations available. In many cases, we will be staying at some superb locations and illustrious hotel/resorts with all the modern conveniences plus restaurants, bars, Wi-Fi and laundry service. These include the hotels in New Delhi, Siliguri, Manas National Park, Kaziranga National Park and Jorhat. There is however a total of five nights in somewhat remote locations. Shikhar Tarry Lodge, for example, is a more basic homestay-style accommodation. Simple but charming hamlets surrounded in nature with views across the Himalayas. Everyone has their own private rooms/ bathroom facilities, hot-water is available but the Wi-Fi options are limited. Similarly, the Nameri Eco Lodge provides wonderful home-style service, delicious food and clean comfortable cottages, all set in the forest. Again, the Wi-Fi could be an issue here. Hopefully the opportunity to be serenaded by trumpeting elephants (for example) worth any minor inconvenience.

Much to the surprise of many, the food in India is outstanding and not just a plate of hot spices. In fact, on many of our tours, participants have felt that India's cuisine was one of the highlights of the tour. Excellent breads, tandoor cooked chicken, and a dazzling variety of vegetarian dishes can cater for any palate. Beef is generally not available at all due to religious reasons.

Providing one takes common sense measures such as not eating uncooked vegetables or unpeeled fruit or drinking unbottled water, participants on VENT trips rarely encounter any serious stomach disorders. Good bottled water is always available.

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** India is one of the most photogenic countries in the world. You could spend a day literally standing in one spot, and shooting in all directions. Furthermore, the wildlife is exceptionally tame. Add good lighting and a preponderance of open habitats, and you have a photographer's paradise. However, beware of dust, and bring spares of all those batteries you may need, in addition to lots of digital memory.

**CLIMATE:** At the time of our visit (January) is the northern hemisphere winter period. Because of the wide geographical range that our tour covers, we will encounter a broad spectrum of temperatures from VERY cold and damp to warm, occasionally hot conditions with very bright sunshine. In general, the cooler drier conditions make this an ideal time to visit the subcontinent. Average temperatures in the lowlands of Assam range between 53-75°F. However, for the higher altitude sites it is a very different story - Singalila National Park (days 3-5) the nighttime temperatures can drop below freezing and snowfall is possible. This is typically the COLDEST time of year in north India and we have experienced some genuine cold snaps, so please bring lots of warm clothes.

Bring along a minimum of four to five layers of clothing, which should include a jacket; wind-breaking soft-shell; warm fleece vest; long underwear; hat, gloves and a warm BUFF® or other neck gaiter! In the mornings at all locations, it can be surprisingly cold riding in the back of open jeeps, especially with wind chill. We are unlikely to experience significant rain on this tour.

**CLOTHING:** Casual is the order of the day. Hard wearing, easy-to-wash-and-dry field clothes are ideal. BUFF® brand head and neck wear offer fantastic cover from dust and will keep you warm in the cold mornings. Protection from the sun is essential; therefore, bring a good hat which protects head and neck. Sneakers or sports-type shoes are appropriate as most of the time we will be birding from jeeps (in Manas and Kaziranga NP), but decent boots may be beneficial in certain areas like Singalila National Park and Nameri NP, where some walking will be involved.

**In January we can experience cold weather, with temperatures often just below zero degrees Celsius (32°F) in the morning producing frost.** Participants are recommended to bring several layers of warm clothes. Strong rain-proof jackets and pants are highly recommended. In addition, we also recommend bringing at least one or two warm sweaters and a jacket or down vest. **It can be very cold in the early mornings on jeep safaris, particularly due to the wind chill.** Other items that are recommended include a warm head covering such as a knit or fleece hat or balaclava, in addition to a regular birding hat, along with gloves and scarf or neck gaiter. Sunglasses are very useful (occasionally essential). Thick socks that absorb perspiration and cushion one's feet from hard surfaces are important. Blankets are typically provided by the lodges for early morning drives. The days typically warm up to be very pleasant.

Bring lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and pants in natural fabric, such as cotton, or cotton and man-made fiber mixes. These offer protection against the sun and insects (very few) while remaining comfortable, cool and easy to launder. Laundry service will be available at most of the places we will be staying.

**SPECIAL NOTE: Please absolutely NO bright colors. Although the birds and other wildlife are relatively approachable, we will be trying to see a number of very elusive species. Muted colors are essential to enhance our chances. Please do not wear brightly colored clothes, hats, gloves, bags or other paraphernalia. Furthermore, if you can avoid crackling**

**nylon/plastic jackets and pants, this will greatly enhance everyone's enjoyment of the trip and enable the leader to hear those critical but so easily overlooked subtle call-notes of the birds you want to see!**

**CURRENCY:** Rupee (Rs); Currency can only be changed at banks or authorized money changers. Credit cards are accepted by the major hotels on this tour in New Delhi and Agra. Participants are advised to carry sufficient cash in US dollars. This can be changed into rupees at airports or major hotels. Automatic teller machines that are compatible with American banking systems are not readily available in India. Participants need to bring enough cash to cover alcoholic beverages, laundry and perhaps shopping expenses. Everything else is covered in the tour cost.

**EQUIPMENT:** Everyone should have a pair of binoculars that are in good condition. Your tour leader will be carrying a spotting scope; however, you are welcome to bring your own spotting scope if you so wish. You should bring sufficient camera equipment, spares, batteries and digital memory for the duration of the tour. (Most participants find that they require a great deal more digital memory space than they think they will need before leaving home.) India is exceptionally photogenic with lots of good lighting and many opportunities for both cultural, scenic and wildlife photography, and it will likely be almost impossible to obtain additional digital memory once you arrive in New Delhi. UV and polarizing filters are recommended. A supply of strong plastic bags is very useful to protect equipment from rain and especially dust. A small day pack (either waterproofed or with a strong plastic bag inside) is essential for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food and water. However, in many of the birding areas we will have regular access to our transport, which will be attended by a driver and his assistant. Water bottles are important if you like to carry a regular supply of water.

Other useful items include:

1. Flashlight or headlamp - we will be out at night on a few occasions when a small light is essential.
2. Handy wipes and paper tissues - these are especially useful and all participants should carry sufficient for their personal needs for the entire tour.
3. Spare glasses or contact lenses.
4. Sunscreen - Sunscreen lotion is strongly recommended, especially for higher elevations where the UV is much greater. A lip balm is also essential.
5. Umbrella - The collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

**CONDITIONS:** Within (most) national parks of India, all visitors must ride in park service jeeps. Since only three passengers are allowed in the jeep, on some outings you will not be with the VENT leader. The VENT leader will rotate to the extent possible, allowing him/her to spend an equal amount of time with each participant. The park service guide will know the mammals and a great majority of the birds, but may not be as knowledgeable as your VENT guide on some birding aspects. The VENT leader will let the park guides know what birds we may be searching for in particular so they can focus on certain desirable sightings. The birds you will see in the parks are widespread

species that you should see during your time in the parks as well as elsewhere during the trip. Therefore, you will almost surely not miss any birds by virtue of being with local park staff during part of the time.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date, with at least two blank pages for India visa stamp, is required for United States citizens to enter India.

A tourist visa is required for entry into India and must be obtained prior to departure. The visa can be obtained online through the Indian government's website (<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/>) or Travel Document Systems (<https://www.traveldocs.com/>) on the web; or a company which handles visa procurement. Non-United States citizens should check with your local Indian consulate embassy for instructions.

**HEALTH:** Participants are advised **NOT** to drink the tap water. Bottled water will be available at **all times** throughout the tour. Participants should not eat uncooked foods such as meat or vegetables or food that has cooled and/or been sitting in the open. Unpeeled fruit is fine; provided you wash the exterior thoroughly first in clean water.

Cholera and yellow fever inoculations are required only if you arrive within five days of departing from an infected area. Malaria is highly unlikely, but a slight possibility. Participants may wish to protect themselves with prophylactics. These should be taken as prescribed by your doctor. A number of forms of hepatitis may be present and participants are recommended to contact their doctor for advice prior to departure.

VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

**COVID-19:** We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying "Up to Date" with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19.

**Insect Repellents** – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.



Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

**SHOPPING:** India has some very fine handicrafts, including spectacular rugs and carpets from Kashmir, metal cast statues and inlaid marble from Agra, that have to be seen to be believed.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

**Electricity** - India uses 220 volts, 50 cycles, AC. Electricity supplies can be erratic in remote areas or not capable of supporting high wattage items like hair dryers. A flashlight or headlamp with a good supply of batteries will be essential. Do not rely on an electric razor, or always having electricity available for charging your batteries. Please bring all of the power adaptors as sometimes you may find two or even three styles in one room!

Internet: Wi-Fi is available at most locations. All of the major hotels have a Wi-Fi service. There are limited options however at Shikhar Tarry Lodge (days 3-5) and Nameri Eco Camp (days 10-11).

**Language** – The national language of India is Hindi.

**Time** – 10½ hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

**SUGGESTED READING:** A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

**Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and T. Inskipp. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*.** Christopher Helm Identification Guide Series, 2012. This will cover all of the birds we are likely to encounter. ISBN: 9781408127636 *All participants are recommended to obtain a copy of this guide or Rasmussen and Anderton (2005; see below) as they greatly supersede all previous guides we have advocated for tours to the Indian subcontinent.*

**Arlott, N. *Collins Field Guide Birds of India*.** HarperCollins Publisher, 2015

**Daniel, J.C. *The Book of Indian Reptiles*.** Bombay Natural History Society, 1983.

**Gurung, K.K. and Singh, Raj. *Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent and Where to Watch Them*.** Oxford: Bishop's Printers Ltd., 1996.

**Insight Guides. *Indian Wildlife*.** Apa Productions, 2007.

**Kazmierczak, Krys and Singh, Raj. *A Birdwatchers' Guide to India*.** Bedfordshire, United Kingdom: Prion Ltd., 1998. This book describes a cross-section of birding sites covering all of India's regions and main habitats—a wonderful and very informative book co-authored by Raj Singh, owner of the company that handles our ground operations in India, Assam and Bhutan. He also co-authored *Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent and Where to Watch Them*.

**TIPPING:** An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

**RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on March 17, 2025, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant’s Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant’s risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the “**Airline**”) is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline’s aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

**McNeely, J.A. & Wachtel, P.S. *Soul of the Tiger*.** New York: Doubleday, 1988. One of the most intriguing and beautifully written books on the complex relationships between man, his myriad beliefs and nature, and the implications for conservation.

**Menon, V. *A Field Guide to Indian Mammals*** Helm Field Series 2009

**Prater, S.H. *The Book of Indian Animals*.** Bombay Natural History Society, 1971. An excellent mammal book with color plates and black and white photographs.

**Rasmussen, P.C. & Anderton, J.C. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*.** Vols. 1 & 2 Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D.C. and Barcelona, 2005. The new standard field guide to birds of India and neighboring countries with a complete taxonomic reappraisal of the birds in this region. Highly recommended although Vol. 2 is not necessary to be carried in the field.

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