

GUJARAT BIRDING TOUR

Day 1: Jamnagar

Fly to Jamnagar, arriving by noon. Transfer to city and check in Hotel President. Afternoon birding at Rosy Bet and Lake near Bhujia Tower within the city.



Day 2: Jamnagar

Full day birding at Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary. Located just 06 Kms from the town of Jamnagar in Gujerat, this sanctuary has been created by building an Earthen Dam, to block the rainwater run off into the sea. This forms a freshwater wetland habitat. The 12 kilometer long dam, separates fresh water on one side and salt water on the other. You can spot thousands of wintering common and Demoiselle cranes, and other water birds including flamingos, pelicans, gulls, Whimbrel, ducks, waders and Indian Skimmers, nesting, and geese. The Black stork nesting can also be seen. Method of Birdwatching is to walk along the dam. It is a refreshing change from riding in jeeps.

Day 3: Jamnagar – Sasan Gir

Drive to Sasan Gir. Check in at Gir birding Lodge. Gir National Park, is the only place in the World, outside Africa, where the lion can be seen in its natural habitat. This last refuge of the Asiatic lion was once threatened with extinction when the population of lions had dwindled to less than twenty in 1913. This prompted the British administrators to put a blanket ban on shooting of the lions and thereby affording the much-needed protection to the king of the wild. Latest census reports have counted 107 lions at Gir. The habitat is diverse - open scrub country, dry deciduous and tropical thorn forest and an evergreen corridor along the riversides. The forest also harbours a variety of smaller animals and a large variety of birds. The plentiful avifauna population has more than 300 species of birds, most of which are resident. The scavenger group of birds has 6 recorded species of Vultures, including the King Vulture. Some of the typical species of Gir include Crested

Serpent Eagle, endangered Bonelli's Eagle, Crested Hawk-eagle, Brown Fish Owl, Great Horned Owl, Bush Quail (or Quail bush), Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-headed Oriole, Crested Swift and Indian Pitta. Afternoon: Jeep Safari in Sasan Gir National Park for birding and Asiatic Lion (03 hrs).

Day 4: Sasan Gir

Morning and afternoon safari in National Park (03 hrs each). Remaining time birding outside the Park .

Day 5: Sasan Gir-Bhavnagar

Morning: Drive from Sasan Gir to Bhavnagar 237 Kms in 4.30 hrs. In the afternoon wetland birding along New Port road, and at Victoria park in mixed woodland and scrub.

Day 6: Bhavnagar- Valvedar – Bhavnagar

After breakfast drive 60 Kms to Velavadar Wild Life Sanctuary to observe grass-land species of birds, including raptors and an impressive concentration of Blackbuck Antelopes. Created for the conservation of the Blackbuck, Valavedar is a tiny 35sq kms but unique grassland eco-system. Savanah grasslands along with areas of Mesquite and dry deciduous scrub are the habitat. Valavedar is of interest to birders because of the huge roost of about 2000 harriers, which is formed every winter. (Oct to early Feb). The dominant species is Montagu's. Another rare sight (June to Oct) is that of the lesser Florican, which migrate and settle here to breed in the grasslands Birders can spot the Stoliczka's Bushchat, Ashy- crowned sparrow lark, Rufous-tailed, and crested Larks, Desert and Variable wheatears, Southern Grey and Rufous-tailed Shrikes. Apart from the Harrier, other raptors to be seen could include Black-shouldered Kite, Shikara, and Short-toed Snake Eagle. Common Crane and other waders can be spotted on the Alag River.

The park has more than 1,000 Black Buck that can be viewed on the open grassland from very close range. This exclusively Indian animal is perhaps, the most graceful and beautiful of its kind. A visit to Valavadar is worthwhile just to see their magnificent leaps and lightning sprints. The wolf and the jackal are the main predators in the park. Other mammals likely to be seen are Bengal fox, Black-naped Hare, Indian Desert Gerbil, Jungle cat, and Nilgai. Driving in jeeps with walks is the usual method of watching. There

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are also some watch towers and hides maintained by the forest department. Return to Bhavnagar.

Day 7: Bhavnagar-Zainabad

Drive to Zainabad. 200 Kms in 04 hrs to reach this unique arid region of Gujarat. Passing through the fringe of the Little Rann of Kutch, we will stop at some water holes to check birds. Evening: Excursions to a typical Saurashtra village, handloom weaving and dyeing units and the village potter.

Day 8: Zainabad (Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary)

The entire Little Rann of Kutch known as the Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary is a featureless expanse of flat land - the sea bed - dotted with islands known as "Baits" which form the core for the flora and fauna. This is the largest wildlife sanctuary in India. The Indian wild ass represents the horse tribe - the rare and endangered Ghudkhur (*Equus hemionus khur*) not found anywhere else in the world. In the Little Rann of Kutch, the Asses are attracted by the flat grass covered expanses known as bets or islands where coarse grasses spring up in monsoon. With the advent of summer, the asses move to bets in which there is perennial supply of water and grass. As for speed and stamina, there is no one in the animal kingdom to match the wild ass in speed and stamina. The Wild Ass is capable of marathon runs at a pace of about 24 km/h for as long as two hours, reaching a top speed of 70 km/h over short distances. The wild ass is a strong animal and a stallion will fight viciously for the possession of the mare in the mating season.

The combatants rear up on their hind-legs, and kick and bite viciously. Other wild life comprises the Blue-Bull, Chinkara, Hedgehog and carnivores such as the Wolf, Jackal, Fox, Jungle and Desert Cats can also be found here in large numbers. The Little Rann is equally rich in bird life.

A variety of birds - almost three hundred species, can be seen in and around the Rann during winter. Cranes and Flamingos can be seen in thousands. Rare birds such as the MacQueen's Bustard, Falcons, a large number and species of larks and other arid region birds can be seen. Reptiles such as snakes, tortoises, lizards, are also found. The method of exploration and birding is by open jeeps. - Morning and Afternoon safaris are an unusual experience. The sunrise and sunset are breathtaking.

We have a day-long wild life and birding safari into the Rann, using jeeps. Birds on the ground, aquatic species, Wild Ass, other mammals and reptiles will be observed. Key Species: White-eyed Buzzard, Sykes's Nightjar, MacQueen's Bustard, Spotted Sandgrouse, Red-necked Falcon, Indian Bushlark, Rock Bush Quail, Sirkeer Malkoha, Grey-necked Bunting, House Bunting.

Day 9: Zainabad (Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary)

A second day for morning and afternoon safaris, looking for specific species which we may have missed earlier.

Day 10: Departure

Transfer to Ahmedabad in 03 hrs for onward flight. TOUR ENDS

Tariff: US \$ 1320.00 per person

Inclusions:

- Accommodation Dbl room with all meals as per itinerary
- Entries to Khajedia, Sasan Gir, Valvadar and Little Rann
- Birding guide
- Transfers by AC car with driver.
- Jeep for safari at Little Rann and Sasan Gir