



TOUR INFORMATION FOR BHUTAN (VIA INDIA)

These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING INDIA: At the time of writing, United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure from the UK plus a **12 month regular multiple entry tourist visa** to enter India. This visa must be applied for individually.

Please complete an online application and arrange an appointment to go to your nearest consulate. Full details can be found here <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/index.html>

Note that you must not apply for an online E-visa for this tour as we re-enter India at the end of the trip by driving across the border. E-visas are permissible if entering via an air or sea port.

At the time of writing there are visa offices in London (tel: 020 7379 6242), Birmingham (tel: 0121 2122782), Edinburgh (tel: 0131 2292144) and Belfast (tel: 028 9087 8787).

Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Indian High Commission for entry requirements.

At the time of writing postal applications can take up to two weeks to process, however please check with your nearest Visa Office for the most up-to-date information.

When we issue you with your final payment invoice we will include answers to some of the questions mentioned on the visa application form.

There are visa service agencies that can provide you with an information pack on how to obtain a visa. They will also process your application for you however they will charge a handling and processing fee. One such company is Trailfinders Visa Service <http://visas.trailfinders.com> (tel: 0207 368 1504).

ENTERING BHUTAN: The Kingdom of Bhutan requires a passport to be valid for a minimum of six months beyond the intended date of departure from Bhutan.

Our Bhutanese agent will apply for a visa on your behalf and this will be issued on our arrival at Paro International Airport. This is to avoid unnecessary hassles and delays which may occur in Paro. Sunbird therefore needs a copy of the page from your passport which has your photograph, passport number and date of issue written on it. This can be sent either by photocopying and posting, or by scanning and emailing it to us. Participants should not try to obtain a Bhutanese visa themselves. *The cost of the Bhutan visa is included in the tour price.*

Please remember to take a passport-sized photograph with you. When you arrive in Paro this photograph is sometimes handed over to the Visa Officer who will stamp your passport with the visa.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket/electronic ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously, you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

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TIME DIFFERENCE: India is 5½ hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Bhutan is a further 30 minutes ahead of India. During British Summer Time the difference is one hour less.

CURRENCY: The currency in India is the Indian rupee (INR). The Bhutanese currency is the ngultrum and there is direct parity with the Indian rupee so that one rupee is worth the same as one Bhutanese ngultrum. Indian rupees are accepted everywhere throughout Bhutan and are often given at official foreign exchange counters inside the country instead of the national currency. Please note that Bhutanese ngultrum are NOT accepted by anyone in India so it is important to spend all your Bhutanese currency before departing Bhutan. Indian rupees may not be brought into or taken out of the country (except to Bhutan and Sikkim) but there are currency exchange facilities at the airport in Delhi and at the hotel that we will use there (briefly) on the first night of the tour.

It is important to ask for, and retain, a currency exchange form as this will be needed to reconvert any unused Indian rupees back in to western currency at the airport when you finally leave India.

In Bhutan, there are currency exchange facilities at Paro international airport and at our hotel in Thimpu. While we have found both American Express and Thomas Cook sterling and US dollar travellers cheques to be widely and readily accepted in banks and in hotels, in both Delhi and Thimpu US dollars, in cash, are much more readily accepted and indeed preferred.

Credit cards are accepted at the major hotels and shops in India, but only American Express cards are generally accepted in Bhutan. The government handicraft emporium in Thimpu accepts both American Express and Visa. American dollars are readily accepted here and at other stores in Bhutan. Sterling is not so readily accepted.

As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and meal costs you need only bring enough money to cover purchases of a purely personal nature. Note that in some of the more remote Bhutanese hotels drinks can be expensive and a can of coke, for example, can cost more than £1. Beer however is usually cheaper – often about £2.00 for a large bottle.

LANGUAGE: There are 15 officially recognised languages in India and many more tribal languages and dialects. However, one can almost always get by with English. There are also four officially recognised languages in Bhutan, though English is taught in schools and is very widely spoken and understood. Many of the hotel staff and all our guides and drivers throughout the tour will speak reasonably fluent English.

CLIMATE: Delhi will be very hot, with mid-day temperatures in mid-late April perhaps approaching 40°C. Lowland Bhutan, i.e. the areas south of Zhemgang and near Gelephu, will also be warm, perhaps 30-32°C if the weather is clear. Since much of the remainder of the tour is spent at moderate altitude it will be noticeably cooler for the bulk of our trip. Temperatures on the higher passes may drop to just below freezing and there may be a few patches of snow or ice lingering in shaded roadside gullies. It is unlikely to snow during the tour. Rainfall cannot be totally discounted anywhere and is perhaps most likely around Paro, Thimpu and Punakha in western Bhutan. Our first campsite, the one near Sengor on the upper Limithang road in eastern Bhutan, is at about 2800 metres (approx. 9000 feet) and, if the sky is clear, night-time temperatures can drop as low as 1 or 2°C. Our other campsites – the ones at Yongkola on the lower Limithang road and the one near Tingtibi south of Zhemgang, are at about 1700 & 650 metres respectively and the nights at all these sites will be comfortably warm.

Note that temperatures in mountainous regions such as Bhutan can vary enormously from year to year and often dramatically throughout the day and could range from 0-32°C.

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ALTITUDE: On the second day of the tour we will fly from Delhi into Paro airport (2280 metres or about 7400 feet). It is exceptional for anyone to experience serious altitudinal problems at this altitude. From there, on our first full day in Bhutan, we will drive to Thimpu, which at 2310 metres (approx. 7550 feet), is only marginally higher. After that we will drive up to the summit of the Dochu La (3112 metres or about 10,050 feet), one of Bhutan's five major road passes.

We will spend a short while at this altitude and, as throughout the tour, we will try to avoid walking up hill and will move at a slow pace to avoid altitudinal headaches, breathlessness etc. Our next two nights will be spent near Punakha (1435 metres, 4,500 feet) and the intervening day's activities will be at, or near, this altitude also.

From Punakha, we will move on spending the night at Gangtey in the Phobjika Valley. At (3120 metres or about 10,800 feet) this will be our highest overnight stay. Very few people have suffered altitudinal problems other than mild headaches and minor bouts of breathlessness at this altitude. From Gangtey we will continue east crossing a couple of high road passes - the Pele La at 3300 metres (11,132 feet) and the Thrumsing La (Bhutan's highest road pass) at about 4000 metres (13,000 feet). We will not spend much time bird watching at the latter site and will keep physical exertions at these altitudes to a minimum.

In any case, we will do virtually all our bird watching from the road, usually walking down hill, and our vehicle will always be close at hand so that anyone wishing to take a longer break can easily do so.

We anticipate no serious altitudinal problems on this carefully chosen tour loop. Most acclimatisation problems can be overcome by sitting quietly in, or near, the vehicle and by drinking plenty of fluid. If you are prone to altitude sickness we can provide an oxygen cylinder with a mask if given advanced notice, however we would suggest that you consider carefully the wisdom of going on this tour.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: The tour will not be particularly physically strenuous but we will have a series of lengthy days and these can be tiring. In several places the best areas of forest will be some distance away from our hotels and we will need to make early starts on some of these days. This will mean leaving the hotels as early as 04h00 or 05h00 on several days. We will have breakfast in the field most days and this will entail our ground crew going ahead of us and setting up their cooking equipment. We will often do some bird watching before joining the crew for breakfast. Tables, chairs, plates and cutlery etc. are all provided for these excellent and enjoyable meals. We will usually also have lunch in the field, and once again the crew will normally go ahead of us and set up the tables and chairs at a suitably scenic spot.

Most of the birdwatching will be done from the road. Away from Paro, the capital Thimpu and Punakha, the second capital, there is relatively little traffic and in any case the forests are often so dense that it would be impractical to try venturing into them. There will probably only be a couple of occasions where we will venture onto forest trails - one of these trails is rather steep and our walk along it typically lasts for about one and a half miles. Our coach will drop us at the start of the trail and drive around to rejoin us at the bottom so anyone not wishing to do the walk does not need to. The second forest trail is another that we will walk on for about one-and-a-half miles and again this trail is down hill all the way. The coach will drop us at the top and will wait for us at the bottom. The leader will explain more about these trails, and the other day's events, during the tour.

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We only spend one night at most of our hotels, moving on most days. We will remain out all day and aim to arrive at our next hotel in the late afternoon/early evening. On many days there will be a break of an hour before dinner. We'll compile a checklist of the birds we've seen just before or just after dinner and then retire early to bed (especially when we're making an early start the next day).

As much of the tour is at medium temperatures bird activity continues throughout the day and conditions remain pleasant, so we won't be scheduling long mid-day breaks as we sometimes do in hot tropical areas. If anyone wishes to have a longer break during the day and stay with the bus, this will never be a problem. Our bus will be with us throughout the tour and anyone taking a break can rejoin the group when they wish to.

We anticipate having at least two vehicles with us throughout the tour - one for us and at least one for our Bhutanese ground crew. In this situation, we have more flexibility and can offer the option of returning to our hotel early for those who wish. On a couple of days there will be some optional pre-breakfast bird watching. There will also be a couple of occasions where we will take an optional after dinner owl walk.

We try to make as many of our birding excursions as possible optional, so that if you find the pace too tiring it is possible to take some time off and relax. However, it is important to realise that on this tour we are moving on most days and only spend more than one night at the hotel near Punakha and at two of our three campsites. Consequently, it is rarely possible to take the entire day off.

Essentially we aim to provide dawn to dusk birding for those who want it and as many opportunities as possible to opt out for those who wish to pursue other interests or simply relax.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting.

A malaria preventative, along with up-to-date inoculations against typhoid and polio are recommended. There are several anti-malarial drugs available and as the situation changes quickly we suggest consulting your doctor for the latest advice 4-6 weeks before your trip. It might also be worth checking that you are adequately protected against tetanus. Hepatitis is reasonably common in India so many visitors obtain an inoculation shortly before travelling. As some of these inoculations cannot be given concurrently, you should contact your doctor straight away to obtain advice about when to start your treatment.

Biting insects are not numerous, but biting Black Flies do occur locally: insect repellent will provide adequate protection. Tap water is not safe to drink, but bottled water, soft drinks and beer are widely available.

On some of the lowland trails, particularly the ones down the Zhemgang road, we may encounter a few small terrestrial leeches. These are well known to travellers in South East Asia and are not harmful. They are found on the forest floor, are typically quite scarce at this time of year but can be more common after it has rained. The best way to prevent these leeches from getting onto your ankles is to spray your boots with insect repellent. Be careful however to ensure that your boots will not be damaged by the chemicals in the repellent, which is mildly corrosive on rubber and some synthetic materials. Canvas and especially suede desert boots are not affected and are ideal for spraying with repellent.

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The other widely used technique is to make a pair of 'leech socks'. These are made from material such as densely woven cotton and come above the ankles onto the calf. These leech socks should have a drawstring at the top to hold them in place. These can also be sprayed with repellent (which leeches hate) and this almost guarantees that the little beasts will not get through to bare skin! Leech socks are available for purchase from the Oriental Bird Club sales, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, or visit their website: www.orientalbirdclub.org.

While food hygiene is generally much better than in Nepal mild intestinal disorders are not uncommon in both India and Bhutan. We suggest bringing anti-diarrhoea medicine such as Imodium. Packets of Dioralyte are also worth bringing as they replace the vital salts and minerals lost during a bout of diarrhoea. Finally, be sure to bring adequate supplies of all personal medication, as it may be impossible to obtain them during the tour.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: Throughout most of the tour we will be staying in moderate or good quality accommodation. Our hotels or guesthouses will always be among the best that are available and although the rooms will always be clean and fairly well-maintained it must be remembered that Bhutan is a third world country and that hotel facilities are below what we are used to in the West. You should also be aware that very few tourists visit sites away from western Bhutan (this is a lot of the attraction of an adventurous tour such as this) and that the tourist infrastructure in the east is still in its infancy.

In Paro, and near Punakha, we will be staying in good quality hotels. All the rooms will have en suite bathrooms with showers, baths and a western toilet. There will be ample supplies of hot water and constant electricity.

Once east of Punakha the number of foreign tourists drops off dramatically and the standard of the accommodation drops slightly. At both Trongsa and Jakar we will again stay in clean, reasonably equipped, family run guest houses and both are the best accommodation that is available. Both have en suite facilities with showers and western toilets.

At Gangtey we will stay in a guesthouse in the Phobjika Valley, about a twenty-minute drive from the spectacular Gangtey Gumpa. The Phobjika Valley is connected to the main electricity grid but there are occasional power cuts here and, while our guesthouse has its own generator, it usually takes the staff a few minutes to get this up-and-running in the event of a power cut. Each room has an en suite bathroom with a Western toilet and a shower.

Partly because the accommodation in eastern Bhutan is somewhat basic, and partly to avoid long drives and to be near the best bird watching, we have decided to camp at three or four sites. We will spend a total of either four or seven nights under canvas - one at Sengor about one-third of the way down the Limithang road, three more near Yongkola further down the Limithang road and three more at two different sites on the Zhemgang road. Note however that a new guest house has recently been built at Yongkola and we would hope everyone will be able to stay in that but during peak times such as early April they don't take reservations and operate on a first come, first served basis and if another group arrives ahead of ours we will unfortunately have to camp. We spend three nights at Yongkola. Our time at Yongkola will be followed by one night back in a comfortable guest house in Jakar before we go on to spend three more nights camping on the Zhemgang road, two nights near Tingtibi and a third night closer to Gelephu. Here, as always we will use modern, two-man tents.

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These are spacious, decent quality walk-in tents, each with sown-in groundsheets, a fly-sheet and a large door at one end. They measure about 10' long and 8' wide and are about 7' high down the central ridge. Our ground agents will erect the tents for us. Each double tent will be provided with two comfortable camp beds each with a mattress and a couple of thick blankets or quilts.

Single tents are almost exactly the same, except that only one bed will be provided. One, usually two, latrine tents are also provided. We will have a separate 'mess tent' complete with tables and chairs for our meals. All our camps will also have an enclosed 'shower tent' that is approximately 7' tall and 4' square.

Our camp staff will provide large buckets of hot water and a ladle for showering. This 'shower tent' might not be available for our one night at Sengor (we've found that it's a little too cold there for most people to be interested in having a shower) and instead bowls of hot water for washing will be provided. When the tour is well subscribed and our group large the leader usually divides it in to two with half of the group having showers one night, the other half of the group the second night. If the first group shower quickly there is then usually ample time for other people to also shower. Those not showering will be provided with bowls of hot water and this has worked well on previous tours.

People who are sharing rooms will also share a tent - there is plenty of space and those who have requested single rooms will also have a tent to themselves. We are unable to guarantee single rooms at every hotel but if you have requested a single room and you do have to share occasionally, we will refund the appropriate single room supplement for those nights.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: As we are moving on regularly laundry can be a slight problem. There are laundry services at our hotel in Punakha where we stay for two nights. It will also be possible to leave laundry at our guesthouse in Gangtey and to pick it up when we return from camping on the Limithang road. In the past our camp crew have also been able to handwash many of our items for us – for a small fee.

ELECTRICITY: Both India and Bhutan operate on the same 240 voltage as the U.K. but an adaptor is needed for the 2 or 3 round-pin sockets. An international travel plug can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: The food on the tour will, for the most part, be very good. We will have a few hotel breakfasts and most of the others will be cooked for us in the field by our ground staff. The meals that our ground crew provide when we are camping are amazing and are usually the tastiest of the entire tour. Field breakfasts are almost invariably tastier than those provided by any of the hotels. They usually consist of porridge or cornflakes, followed by scrambled, fried or poached eggs, or omelettes often with baked beans or sausages. There are also ample supplies of toast and jam, and tea and coffee. As always in Bhutan the quantities of food provided will be vast. Lunches will usually be eaten in the field and will frequently be a meal cooked for us on site. These are often lighter than our breakfast with a wide variety of soups, biscuits, bread and cheeses being offered over the course of the tour.

All evening meals will be in our hotels (usually hot buffets) except when camping, where our camp staff will cook for us. Up to ten different dishes have been provided at dinner and there's always more than enough!

In contrast to some other parts of the Indian subcontinent food hygiene is good in Bhutan and although mild stomach upsets are sometimes encountered these are often due to a change of diet rather than anything more sinister and we anticipate very few problems here.

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Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

INTERNET ACCESS AND MOBILE PHONES: The hotel that we will use (briefly) in Delhi at the start and end of the tour has free wireless internet. The only other hotels on the tour loop that offer wireless internet access are the ones in Punakha, Trongsa, Jakar (Bumthang), Gelephu and Gauhati. Note however that the service in many of these places is occasionally, or perhaps even frequently not working, and that even when it is up and running the connection speeds are usually slower than what many of us used to at home.

An increasing number of foreign mobile phone operators are now forming alliances with one or other of the two Bhutanese mobile phone companies and a modest number of foreign mobile phones can be used in Bhutan. If this is important to you we recommend that you contact your mobile phone provider to see whether your device will be usable in Bhutan before the trip.

CLOTHING: Dress is informal throughout, except when visiting Dzongs (forts). Dzongs contain the local Government Offices as well as the religious body (monks), and as a mark of respect, visitors are asked to wear formal dress. The Bhutanese Department of Culture says that when visiting Dzongs tourists should wear shirts with collars and long sleeves, and full length trousers. T-shirts are acceptable but must be worn under a jacket which has a collar. Unacceptable clothing in a dzong includes a shirt without a collar or long sleeves; short trousers, an umbrella; caps or sunhats; sandals and slipper-type footwear.

FIELD CLOTHING: Flexibility is the key. Light, warm-weather clothing is the general rule around Delhi and during the time we spend in lowland Bhutan. This should include a suitable hat and long-sleeved garments for protection against the sun. A jacket, warm hat, sweater and gloves are required for the potentially cold and windy mountains elsewhere in Bhutan. Comfortable walking shoes or boots are the recommended footwear. Rain is possible particularly in the western mountains, and so adequate rainwear (a jacket and over-trousers) is advisable.

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT: Please bring the following:

Insect repellent	Sun block or sun screen
Alarm Clock	Sun hat and/or umbrella
Cigarette lighter or matches	Shoulder bag or small
Water bottle	back-pack for daily use
Personal medication	Spare passport-style photograph
Universal sink plug	

Flashlight with spare batteries (hands free head lights are also very useful especially when camping).

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Plastic bags for dirty laundry. Please note that a couple of the hotels provide laundry facilities and our camp crew can also wash items for us (for a small fee) – but laundry bags are rarely available.

Hot water bottle. We will spend one night camping at Sengor and a few previous participants have brought a hot water bottle for that night. Most people have not and have fared perfectly OK.

Miscellaneous: As we will be spending six nights under canvas participants should bring their own towel and a sheet sleeping bag liner. Our crew will provide everyone with a hand towel and a larger towel but these are invariably of rather poor quality and, while adequate for many people, are not particularly absorbent or useful. Sleeping bags are not needed as our agents will provide upper and lower bed sheets (which will be changed once during the tour – hence the need for your own sheet sleeping bag), two thick blankets or a couple of quilts and camp beds to sleep on for these nights. The only camp site that is likely to be cold is our first one - the one below Sengor on the Limithang road. Night-time temperatures have varied enormously here and have ranged from a chilly 1 or 2°C (rare) to a low of +13°C in other years. Usual night time minimum temperatures are around 7-8°C. If you think that you will be cold in your tent you could either take your own sleeping bag or be prepared to sleep in some of your own clothes as well as the bedding provided by our crew.

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following for group use:

Telescope & tripod

Field guides and references

Laser pointer

Tape recording/Playback equipment

Small first-aid kit

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these stack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: India and Bhutan both offer abundant photographic opportunities throughout. Since dust may be a problem, equipment should be packed in plastic bags. If you wish to use a digital camera to 'digiscope', please make sure you also bring a telescope and tripod as the leader's telescope will not be available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders and drivers will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: Transportation between sites is by coach in both Delhi and in Bhutan. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

Our internal flights from Delhi to Paro are with Druk Air, Bhutan's national airline while out flight back to Delhi from Gauhati in Assam are with a good quality Indian airline. Both of these carriers' planes are very modern and their safety record is excellent.

SMOKING: Smoking was made illegal in Bhutan in early 2005. After that date cigarettes could not be bought in or brought in to Bhutan – however this law was relaxed slightly in 2011 so that visitors can now bring 200 cigarettes in to Bhutan providing that they are for their own use only. This new law is enforced in all public places and applies to both foreign tourists and Bhutanese citizens – and smoking cigarettes is considered a serious offence in Bhutan with penalties including a modest fine but also stronger penalties for those found bringing large amounts of cigarettes in to the country. These penalties can even involve spending between three and five years in jail! Even outside Bhutan and in keeping with all our tours smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Grewal, B. 1993. Odyssey Nature Guide to Birds of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Guidebook Company Limited, Hong Kong. (ISBN 962 217 311 X). An excellent photographic guide covering some of the species we will see.

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Grewal, B. 1995. A Photographic guide to the Birds of India and Nepal. New Holland, London. (ISBN 1 85368 588 7). A pocket-sized photo guide illustrating 252 species, many of which we will see.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and Inskipp, T. 1998. Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Christopher Helm. London. A superb book with excellent plates and comprehensive text but weighing in at 2kgs it's more of a handbook than a field guide.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and Inskipp, T. 1999. Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Christopher Helm. London. (ISBN 0-7136-5165-2). An excellent portable field guide that illustrates all the species we will see on this tour using the same plates as the same authors' hefty 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent' (but see above and below).

Inskipp, C., Inskipp, T. and Grimmett, R. 2nd edn. 2004. Birds of Bhutan. Christopher Helm, London. (ISBN 0-7136-5163-6). A truly pocket-sized field guide with illustrations of most of Bhutan's birds. Authoritative but brief text accompanying each plate. Useful introductory section on Bhutan's habitats and bird watching areas.

Kazmierczak, K., and B. van Perlo. 2000. A Field Guide to Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Pica Press. Pocket-sized and with a well-researched text and excellent distribution maps, this is perhaps the best book to bring in addition to '*Birds of Bhutan*' (see above). **Recommended.**

Rasmussen Pamela C. and John C Anderton. 2005. Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide. Lynx Edicions. (ISBN: 84-87334-67-9). Volumes I & II: The most complete and up-to-date guide to the birds of the region. Includes much previously unpublished data on identification, distributions, vocalizations and taxonomy, along with critical re-appraisal of historic information. **This is now the recommended field guide for this, and all Sunbird's tours to the Indian Subcontinent.**

Spierenburg, P. 2005. Birds in Bhutan: Status and Distribution. Oriental Bird Club, Bedford. (ISBN 0-9529545-1-6). An excellent guide to the status and distribution of all of Bhutan's birds.

Other references:

Ali, S. and S.D. Ripley. 1983. Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan - Compact Edition. Oxford University Press, Delhi. (ISBN 19 561245 0). The definitive work on the sub-continent's avifauna, though now somewhat dated, and much too bulky to take with you.

Daniel, J.C. 1983. The book of Indian Reptiles. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay. An excellent guide to the reptiles of India with many good colour plates.

Das, Indraneil. 2002. Snakes & other Reptiles of India. New Holland, U.K. (ISBN 1 84330 125 3). A useful & well illustrated guide to Indian reptiles.

Inskipp, C. and Inskipp, T. 1993. Birds recorded during a visit to Bhutan in autumn 1991. Forktail 8:97-112 (Forktail is a publication of the Oriental Bird Club). See next reference.

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Inskipp, C. and T. Inskipp. 1995. An Introduction to Birdwatching in Bhutan. World Wildlife Fund Bhutan programme, Bhutan. A pocket-sized booklet primarily aimed at the native Bhutanese market but including brief descriptions and illustrations of 35 Bhutanese species. The bulk of the booklet is devoted to a coded checklist of all the birds recorded in Bhutan up to the end of 1994.

Inskipp, T., Lindsey, N. & Duckworth, W. An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region. (1966) Oriental Bird Club. (ISBN 0-9529545-0-8). An excellent and authoritative list of all the birds of the Oriental region giving preferred English and scientific names, pseudonyms and a wealth of information on recent, not so recent and potential taxonomic changes.

Israel, S. and T. Sinclair. 1987. Indian Wildlife. APA Productions, Singapore. (ISBN 9 62421 044 6). An excellent guide to Indian wildlife illustrated with many colour photographs. Good background reading before the tour.

Menon, Vivek. 2003. A Field Guide to Indian Mammals. Dorling Kindersley, New Delhi. (ISBN 0-14-302998-3). An excellent, comprehensively illustrated informative book & easily the best mammal guide to the subcontinent.

Prater, S.H. 1980. The Book of Indian Animals. 4th Edition. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay. (ISBN 0 19 562169 7) An excellent guide to India's mammals with good quality colour illustrations. The leader will have a copy available for reference.

More general literature:

Armington, Stan. 1998. Lonely Planet, Bhutan. (ISBN 0-86442 483 3). **Recommended**. By far the best Bhutanese travel guide.

Clements, J. F. 2000. Birds of the World - A Checklist. 5th edition. Pica Press. This totally revised edition lists all the subspecies and is therefore extremely useful when researching taxonomic issues.

Gurun K.K. & Raj Singh. 1997. Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent and where to watch them. This excellent guide contains good colour plates of the majority of the mammals which occur in the Indian Subcontinent and is a much more portable paperback volume than Slater. The guide has been published privately in Great Britain to a very high quality but is not available for sale to the general public. We have a limited supply of the guides in the Sunbird office should you wish to order a copy to take on the tour. The cost is £16.30 per copy (including postage and packing).

Pommaret-Imaeda, F. 1993. Illustrated Guide to Bhutan. 2nd revised edition. Odyssey Publications. Hong Kong. (ISBN 962 217 341 1). An excellent and well-illustrated guide book.

Vas, E.A. 1986. The Dragon Kingdom: Journeys through Bhutan. Lancer International, New Delhi. ISBN 978 8170620075

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MAPS:

India: India 5 N-E. India, Bangladesh. Nelles Verlag, Munchen. Covers all the region including Bhutan and Assam at a scale of 1:1,500,000.

Assam: A road guide to Assam. Discover India Series published by TT (1993). Maps and Publications Ltd, Madras. Simple but useful map at a scale of 1:950,000.

Bhutan: Simply called Bhutan and published in 1988 by Diefenbacher/Herrmann GEOCENTER ILH Stuttgart, this attractive map covers the whole country at a scale of 1:600,000. **Excellent.**

Bhutan: Road Map. 1:500,000. The best map covering the whole of Bhutan. Berndtson & Berndtson. (ISBN 3-929811-21-9). £5.50.

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AUDIO GUIDES

Connop, S. 1993. Birdsong of Nepal. Turaco Nature service, Ontario. (ISBN 0 938027 09 3) Contains sound recordings of 66 species on one 90 minute tape.

Connop, S. 1995. Birdsong of the Himalayas. Turaco Nature Service, Ontario. (ISBN 0 938027 16 6) Contains excellent sound recordings of 70 species, many recorded in Bhutan and published here for the first time.

Roche, J.C. 1990. Forests and Mountains of Asia. Sittelle. Contains six atmosphere recordings, two done in Nepal.

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.orientalbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your international air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions, please contact us.