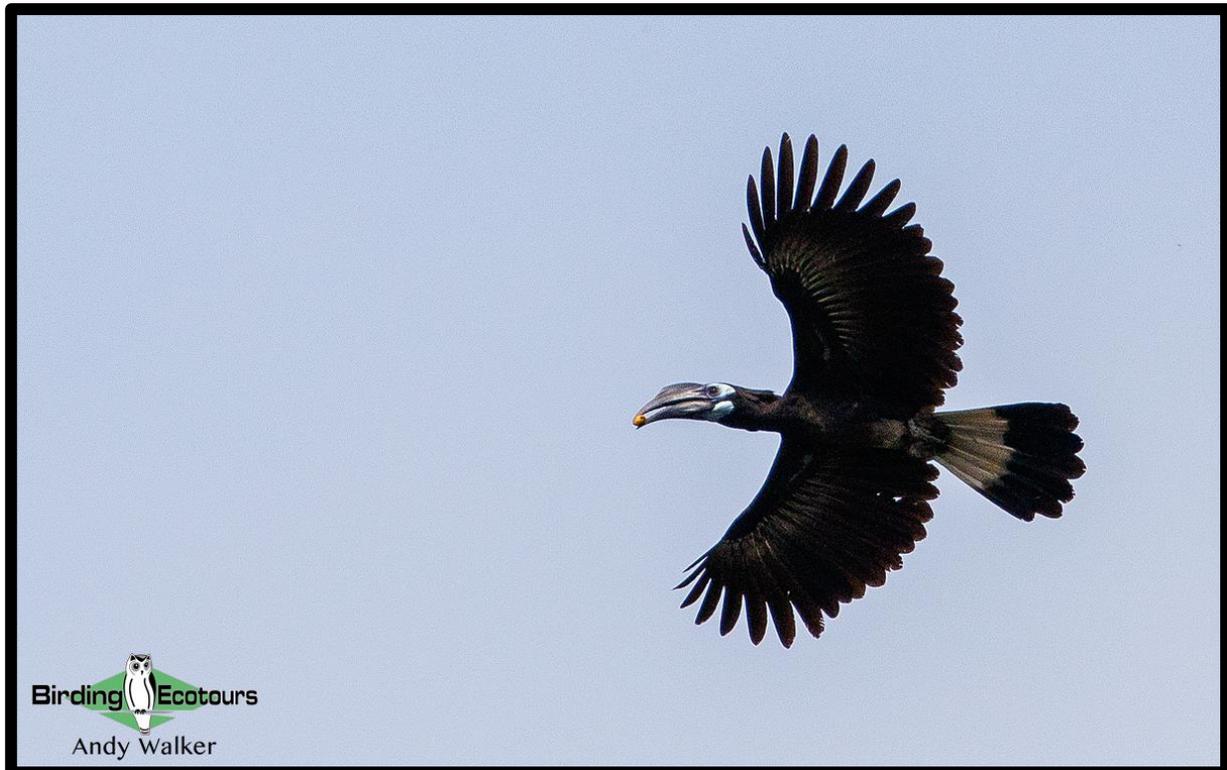




## SOUTHERN THAILAND: JEWELS OF THE SOUTH

### TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



Here is a **Bushy-crested Hornbill** carrying food back to its nest. Hornbills are a huge feature on our southern Thailand birdwatching tour with several species likely.

**GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THAILAND CAN BE READ [HERE](#)****TOUR OUTLINE**

This two-week Thai birding tour visits some of the most spectacular of the unique karst limestone landscapes in the country, during our search for the special birds of southern Thailand. This is an extra-small group tour, with a maximum of just six people, ensuring a much better birding experience than is possible in a larger-group environment.

A great many quality birds are on offer here, such as **Malayan Banded Pitta**, **Mangrove Pitta**, **White-crowned Hornbill**, **Helmeted Hornbill** (along with several other hornbill species), **Scarlet-rumped Trogon**, **Green Broadbill**, **Red-throated Barbet**, **Brown-winged Kingfisher**, **Blue-banded Kingfisher**, and **Rail-babbler**. The tour starts and ends in Phuket and during the tour we visit [Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary](#) (National Park), [Si Phang Nga National Park](#), [Khao Sok National Park](#) – including stunning [Lake Ratchaphapha](#) (also known as [Chiaw/Cheow Lan Lake](#)), [Khao Luang \(Krung Ching\) National Park](#), [Thale Noi](#), and [Khao Nor Chu Chi \(Khao Pra-Bang Khram Wildlife Sanctuary\)](#). We will bird in and around a range of forests, mangroves, lakes, rivers, and coastal areas that will yield many bulbuls, trogons, hornbills, kingfishers, broadbills, owls, and malkohas. There are some good photo opportunities on the tour, but we don't generally visit bird blinds like we do on our [central Thailand](#) and [northern Thailand](#) birdwatching tours.

**DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE**

This tour runs at a fairly quick pace with a few long days in the field or traveling and covers many sites to get the most out of the area in question. There are several one-night stays along the tour route. We will spend a lot of time birding in forest, either from vehicles, on foot, or by boat. Most of the trails we walk will be moderately flat and of fairly decent quality, however, there are a couple of hikes that are a bit longer and more strenuous and include some steep inclines. We don't bird at very high elevation on this tour so elevation shouldn't be a problem for anyone. The heat and humidity are likely to be rather draining at times. We always walk at a slow pace when birding and many of the walks are totally optional, sometimes sitting one out and resting in the shade in a campsite with a good view is a great way of seeing some cool birds! On some hikes we will likely cover distances of around three miles (five kilometers), but all walking will be at a slow pace.

We will usually have early morning and late afternoon birding sessions. We will generally sit out the middle part of the day when temperatures are hot and bird activity slow. Sometimes this will be back at our accommodation, but at other times it is likely to be within the forest/national park as we make use of the limited facilities these places have (such as campground and headquarter areas that offer shade and toilets).

We will take a couple of small-boat boat trips on this tour. One around a lake at Thale Noi in small dugout canoe type boats which allow for a great close approach to numerous waterbirds. This trip usually lasts a few hours. The other, more major, boat trip involves visiting Lake Ratchaphapha. We will take a larger boat (but still small) out to a floating hotel where we will spend the night (see "Accommodation" section for more information). We will then use this boat to access different parts of the lake as we bird the forest that cloaks the lake shore and impressive hilly landscape surrounding it. This usually allows us to get closer to a range of secretive hornbills and

other birds, such as a range of forest raptors.

If you get motion sickness (e.g. while in vehicles and/or on boats), please be aware that some of the roads we cover will be windy and we will also be spending time on water, so please bring suitable medication, if required.

## SAFETY

Most of the trails we cover are of a fairly decent quality, though some can be slippery (whether wet or not), so extreme care should be taken at several locations and we will advise you of the trail condition before setting off on our birding. A walking stick/hiking pole would be useful for some trails, such as at Khao Luang (Krung Ching) National Park where the beginning section of the trail is steep and can be slippery – those people not sound on their feet should consider sitting this hike out. There is a nice area to sit and watch for birds at the base of the trail to still see some great birds of the area.

Getting in and out of the boats is done at a basic dock and should be a dry entry/exit. However, if we stop the boat on the lakeshore (to stop and watch for a hornbill nest, for example), we may get out of the boat to be able to watch the nest more comfortably. We will obviously endeavor to moor the boat somewhere dry, but wet and dirty boots could be a possibility.

The tour is in the dry season but as on all of our Thailand bird tours leeches are a possibility, and are probably more likely on this tour than any other, though still not definite here, it really just depends on how wet it has been in the lead up to our tour.

## WEATHER/CLIMATE

It is hot year-round in southern Thailand. We can expect daytime temperatures of around 86–95 °F (30–35 °C) with temperatures at night likely to be around 68–77 °F (20–25 °C). It is likely to feel humid, particularly when in the tropical forests and when birding in the mangroves at the coast. We do not really get any substantial elevation gains on the tour, so much cooler temperatures are unlikely. While it is usually mainly dry at this time of year, rain can occur in the form of afternoon thunderstorms. The sun is strong at this time of year and care should be taken to remain hydrated and use sun protection.

## ACCOMMODATION

We stay in a range of accommodation on this tour, to get us close to the areas we will be birding, these will include hotels, boutique hotels, and lodges. Most of the accommodation is of a typical standard for a bird tour. Most accommodation will have air-conditioning (or a fan), and most, but not all, will have Wi-Fi, though this may be restricted to common areas such as dining areas. We will spend one night in “floating accommodation” on Lake Ratchaprapha, the accommodation is basic with no air-con (but rooms do have fans) and there may be no Wi-Fi here. This accommodation has a no plastic policy. A couple of the places we stay have swimming pools (or a lake!) to swim, should you wish.

## MEALS

On some days (mainly when we have to get into national parks early) we will need to leave the accommodation early and eat a basic picnic breakfast. On some days we will have a picnic lunch. The breakfast/lunch picnics will usually consist of fruit, pastries, yoghurt, nuts, sandwiches, chips, etc. On some days we will get a hot lunch, usually consisting of rice- or noodle-based dishes, with the main meal of the day being in the evening. In some areas (away from tourist areas) alcohol may be difficult to get hold of, or more expensive due to religious reasons. The food of southern Thailand is usually more spicy than other parts of Thailand, though we can ask the people preparing the food to tone the spice levels down, and if you like spicy food, you can request extra spice to be added.

## WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

There is nothing specific required for this tour, please see the Thailand General Information for recommended clothing and other items. As mentioned above, a hiking pole/walking stick will be useful if you are not steady on your feet on a couple of the trails within the national parks. Leech socks could be useful if we hit an unseasonably wet spell and leeches are “out and about”.



*We will enjoy a feast of colorful birds on this tour, featuring barbets, kingfishers, trogons, pittas, bee-eaters, broadbills, malkohas, including the **Red-throated Barbet**, pictured above.*