



THAILAND

GENERAL INFORMATION



Black-crested Bulbul is a common and widespread species in Thailand, one of many attractive bulbuls in the country.

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OUR THAI BIRDING TOURS

We have three incredible birding experiences to offer in Thailand and each one provides a different, exciting suite of birds. Our Thai birding tours are:

1. **Central Thailand: Shorebird Spectacle and Jungle Birding**
2. **Northern Thailand: Spectacular Resident and Migrant Birds**
3. **Southern Thailand: Jewels of the South**

The tours are listed in chronological order, and these can all be combined into one or two slightly longer tours, or one mega tour, should you wish to have a seriously thorough exploration of the country. We also offer custom birdwatching tours in Thailand. Each tour focuses on the special birds of the region, whether that's migrants such as **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**, **Pied Harrier**, **Ultramarine Flycatcher**, or **Siberian Rubythroat**, or stunning resident species such as **Mangrove Pitta**, **Mrs. Hume's Pheasant**, **Green Broadbill**, or **White-crowned Hornbill**. The list of amazing birds possible on these tours is simply staggering, so be sure to check out our latest trip reports [here](#).

ITINERARY AND SPECIES RECORDING (BIRD LISTS AND ANIMAL LISTS)

Prior to all our Thailand bird tours we will email you a detailed daily itinerary (we will also send you detailed meeting/arrival instructions ahead of the tour). Within the itinerary we will provide you with a printed blank diary page so that you can note down any names of birding sites that you may want to keep track of.

On your arrival in Thailand (our three tours start in either Bangkok, Chiang Mai, or Phuket), you will be provided with a printed version of the aforementioned itinerary. Each evening during the tour your Birding Ecotours [tour leader](#) will go through the itinerary with you to let you know of any specifics to be aware of for the next day (for example they will provide you with information on what clothes and equipment will be needed, what time we will be having breakfast, the time we will be leaving the hotel, and key target birds we will be looking for (so you can revise them if you desire!), etc.).

We will provide you with a bird list and list of other animals possible on the tour. At Birding Ecotours we always use the latest [International Ornithological Congress](#) (IOC) taxonomy for birds and for all other wildlife recorded we follow the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) taxonomy, so all our itineraries and checklists follow these taxonomies.

Every evening during the tour we will go through the daily bird and animal list, noting all the species recorded during the day. The list session is totally optional, we know that some of you are not fussed about the listing aspect of the trip, but others very much are. If you do not want to take part in the bird and animal list session that is fine, but it is a very good way to remember what was seen during the day, so it is recommended.

Our tour leader will complete [eBird checklists](#) for all birding time during the tour and they will share these checklists with all participants who use eBird, if desired. Just make sure to provide your eBird user details to us at the beginning of the tour so we are able to do this, unfortunately we cannot retrospectively go back and share old checklists after the tour.

After the tour we will email you a PDF copy of a daily diary-style illustrated trip report. The trip report will include a complete checklist of all wildlife recorded. If we manage to get any

interesting bird, animal, or landscape photographs these will be included in the trip report. If you get great pictures, please feel free to share those with us because we can sometimes include these in the trip report too. Leader photos will also be added to our new [Flickr page](#) and will be put into a “trip report gallery” which is free to view and download, and please feel free to share these with your friends and families.

PASSPORT, VISA, AND LOCAL LAWS

We recommend you check the official Thai government websites and check your government advice for the latest information. For UK citizens please see [here](#), for US citizens please see [here](#), for Canadian citizens please see [here](#), and for Australian citizens please see [here](#). For citizens of other countries please refer to your official government information.

Under normal circumstances most visitors can qualify for a 30-day visa-free visit (“visa-exemption”). However, if you plan on staying in Thailand over 30 days you will need to get a tourist visa from your nearest embassy or consulate. All visitors should have at least six months’ validity remaining in their passport from the date they will be departing Thailand.

Most people will have to show proof of onward travel on arrival in Thailand, i.e. proof that you are leaving, usually by showing your onward flight ticket. Most airlines will not actually let you board a plane to Thailand without first checking that you have a ticket to leave. Please ensure you have all the necessary documents required and please feel free to [contact us](#) if you have any specific questions, though we do recommend talking to your local embassy, consulate, or immigration office too, as they will know of any recent changes that we may be unaware of.

If you are a smoker, please see [here](#) for information on what is and what is not allowed. The Birding Ecotours policy on smoking is provided in our standard [Terms and Conditions](#).

Please make sure that you bring a photocopy of your passport with you on the tour, to be kept in a different location to your original passport, in case of loss/damage. This can be kept with other important documents such as vaccine certificates, emergency contact details, and insurance documents.

Thailand has some very strict laws, and these can change often without much notice. Traveling without ID is illegal and crimes against the state and offences against the monarchy can attract long prison terms or even the death penalty. Take care not to cause offence about the monarchy, including on social media. Please read the full list of local laws as detailed on your government website.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Per our standard [Terms and Conditions](#), we strongly recommend that you have comprehensive trip cancellation insurance to protect against illness, medical issues, accidents, repatriation, loss of luggage or any valuable items, and unforeseen interruptions to travel, or delays of any kind.

HEALTH AND PESTS

We recommend that you consult your doctor or travel clinic regarding any vaccine requirements

ahead of your trip to Thailand. All travelers should be up to date with routine vaccinations and boosters, most travelers should be vaccinated for Tetanus and some travelers should be vaccinated for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Japanese Encephalitis, Rabies, Tuberculosis, and Typhoid.

There is no risk of Yellow Fever in Thailand, however, there is a certificate requirement for anyone arriving from countries with a risk of Yellow Fever transmission (this also includes any layovers in these countries of over twelve hours). See the World Health Organization list of countries with risk of Yellow Fever transmission [here](#).

Please update yourself on the Covid-19 vaccination entry requirements ahead of the tour, such as [here](#).

Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website [here](#) for further health issues to be aware of on a visit to Thailand. The UK “[Travel Health Pro](#)” website provides detailed and useful information for UK travelers heading to Thailand, [here](#). Both these linked webpages are worth studying ahead of joining the tour.

Insect repellent with a high DEET content is highly recommended for most of the areas we visit in Thailand, primarily for the nuisance factor of mosquitoes and other insect pests. There is a low risk of malaria in Thailand but please consult your doctor on what action to take, see the map [here](#). Biting insects and ticks can also result in other nasty illnesses such as Dengue, Chikungunya, Leishmaniasis, Zika, and Scrub (Bush) Typhus (a rash from [Chiggers](#)).

We recommend that any scratches from plants or bites from insects should be cleaned, treated, and covered quickly to reduce the chance of any unpleasant infection.

Sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) should be carried, and a hat should be worn to protect from the powerful rays from the sun, with sunglasses to help prevent glare, this is very important when we are birding at the coast and at the salt pans – particularly relevant to the [central Thailand](#) tour and the [southern Thailand](#) tour. A plentiful intake of water (please bring a reusable water bottle, which we can refill daily with safe drinking water) is essential to maintain hydration.

Poor air quality is a significant public health concern in many areas of the world and can be an issue in some parts of Thailand in both cities and in rural areas (e.g. especially when rice stubble is getting burnt off). Please be aware of this if you have any underlying breathing or respiratory health issues and prepare accordingly.

Health services standards in Thailand are likely to be much lower than what you will be familiar with at home. Bringing a supply of commonly required medicine, creams, etc. can be useful and timesaving. The CDC website provides a full and detailed list of suggested items to pack that may help with your health and safety in Thailand, this can be found [here](#). Earplugs are always useful, especially if you are a light sleeper.

Please also be sure to check the “Dangerous Animals and Plants” section below.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

It is essential that you are covered with suitable medical insurance in the instance of any emergency situation while on the tour. Without insurance, the cost for medical care in Thailand is likely to be very high. As stated in the company’s general [Terms and Conditions](#), we require

you to notify us at the time of registering for this tour of any medical conditions that we should know about (these should include, but not be limited to, walking/mobility issues, diabetes, epilepsy, food and medicinal allergies, heart conditions, and long-term illnesses etc.).

DANGEROUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

There are several dangerous animals to be aware of while birding in Thailand though most of these are extremely rare and unlikely to be encountered on a short trip. Most of these can be found across the whole of the country, though the chance of coming into contact with them can vary depending on where you are. Your tour leader will let you know if we are in an area where dangerous animals are known to occur and some of the Thai national parks put signs in areas where certain animals frequent as a warning, so it is also worth keeping an eye out for those as we are out and about.

Some of the wildlife species to be aware of include **Asian Elephant** (probably the most frequently encountered of the country's most dangerous animals), with others being **Gaur** (Indian Bison), **Leopard**, **Asiatic Black Bear**, and **Sun Bear**. The chance of encountering **Tiger** is, unfortunately, extremely low in Thailand (join our **India: The North – Tigers, Amazing Birds, and the Himalayas** for a great chance to see **Tiger**). There are over 85 species of venomous snakes in Thailand, so all snakes should be viewed from a safe distance and care should be taken when walking in the forest, particularly where you put your hands and feet when moving through vegetation. A wide range of “creepy crawlies” are to be expected in the Thai tropics, such as biting or stinging scorpions, spiders, ants, ticks, centipedes, wasps, mosquitoes, etc. Before you put your boots on in the morning, please check there is nothing hiding inside of them, too.

Our Thailand birdwatching tours are all scheduled during the dry season and therefore the chance of running into leeches are quite low. They are an annoyance rather than being a real health issue, though we acknowledge they are rather disconcerting! Insect repellent sprayed on shoes and ankles can help to keep them at bay (as well as being great for reducing issues with other annoying creatures such as ticks, mosquitoes, and chiggers). “Leech socks” can be worth having in your luggage, just in case we hit an unusually wet period or area during the tour. Leech socks can be purchased fairly easily online.

Many plants in the tropics are covered in rather nasty spikes, needles, or sharp thorns to protect themselves from becoming food to a range of animals, or to help pull themselves through other plants to reach that all important sunlight. These can be rather painful if they break the skin and can also catch and rip clothing. We strongly suggest not just grabbing onto a piece of a plant without checking for any potentially sharp or painful appendage (or any of the aforementioned wildlife).

FOOD AND WATER

Please do not drink the tap water in Thailand. Bottled mineral water is safe and available everywhere (please bring a reusable water bottle to help us reduce the amount of plastic waste generated during the tour). The majority of alcoholic drinks are usually inexpensive, though wines are generally more expensive because they have to be imported. Coffee and tea are commonly found across the country, as are Thai versions of both.

Thai food is often packed full of flavor and most people enjoy the dishes that are on offer at the various places we go birding. Rice and noodles are a staple food and are present at most meals. Thai food is generally fresh and healthy. While in cities and tourist areas it is possible to eat western food, should you prefer, but once away from the cities local-style food is the only option, but is often nice and tasty.

Breakfasts are often simple, sometimes they will be a western style meal, or the Thai version of an “American breakfast” with eggs and fruit likely to also feature. Lunch and dinner dishes are usually rice- or noodle-based and served with chicken, duck, pork, beef, shrimps, fish, or tofu. Plenty of fresh vegetables are usually available too. Following the tradition of much of Asia at lunch and dinner, a variety of dishes will be placed on the table (a mix of meat dishes and vegetarian dishes) and the group will share the meal. Thai food is usually spicy, but we will ask the kitchens to prepare less-spicy meals, with the option of adding extra chili for those who desire something a bit hotter.

On some of our Thailand tours, due to the remote nature of where we will be birding, we will sometimes take picnic breakfasts or lunches, please see the tour-specific information for extra information on this.

Mealtimes are likely to be somewhat flexible depending on our birding or travel plans for the day and so if you need to eat food at a specific time of day (e.g. to agree with medication you are on) we recommend that you bring snacks to supplement the above, such as cereal bars/protein bars, dried fruit etc. There may be the opportunity to grab some snacks from a convenience store while we are in the cities (there are 7-11s and coffee shops on practically every street corner), however, if you want items that are recognizable then it is probably best to bring these from home.

If you have particular food allergies or dietary requirements, please let us know at the time of booking so we can advise whether the tours will be suitable for you.

Please see the tour-specific information for further details regarding “Meals”.

CURRENCY

The currency in Thailand is the Thai baht (฿/THB) and it is divided into 100 satang. The most frequently used notes are ฿20, ฿50, ฿100, ฿500, and ฿1,000 and frequently used coins are ฿1, ฿2, ฿5, and ฿10, along with 1 satang, 5 satang, 10 satang, 25 satang, and 50 satang. When we are in large hotels, Spas, shops, and restaurants in tourist areas or major cities, Visa and Mastercard are easily used. It is however worth noting that cash is really the main way items are purchased in the country. Some of the smaller/independent hotels we visit during our Thai tours will only accept cash payments and this is also likely to include personal items you may wish to purchase, such as drinks, souvenirs, laundry, etc.

It is possible to withdraw cash from ATMs, but bank charges are likely to apply. You may need to notify your card supplier about your trip, so you don't find a temporary block on your card. It will be possible to exchange or draw money at the airports and in the various towns and cities we pass through during the tour. Be aware that in Thailand the ATM machines usually give you your cash before they return your card, so be careful not to walk away from the ATM without waiting for your card to be returned to you. It is recommended to get cash out/exchange currency at the airports as this is likely to be the most convenient method for everyone.

ELECTRICITY

In Thailand the power plugs and sockets are of Type C and Type O (officially), but Type A and Type B (the “American style”) can also be used, but their compatibility is meant to be getting phased out in the long term. Most of the plug sockets in Thailand are actually hybrids between the above plug types.

The standard voltage is 230 volts (V), and the standard frequency is 50 hertz (Hz). Adaptors are needed for most visitors from overseas, you may also need a voltage converter and should be careful with certain appliances that may use a different frequency. To see photographs of the different plug sockets, and to read some additional, useful safety information please see [here](#).

COMMUNICATIONS

Cell phone (mobile phone) signal is widely available across most of the country and most of the places we stay on our tours have Wi-Fi, though this doesn't always reach the rooms and may require sitting in the communal areas to use.

Roaming charges are likely to apply but that will depend on your international roaming package. One option, if you really need phone access during the tour is to get a “Tourist SIM” at the airport on your arrival in the country. You can usually purchase these at the airport on arrival. You will need to provide some information and present your passport. You will most likely need to pay cash for this. Most providers offer a similar service/cost, but it is worth noting that queues can be long at these counters.

TRANSPORTATION AND SEAT ROTATION

We use modern, comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles during our Thailand bird tours, the exact type of vehicle depends on the final number of clients on the tour and the terrain we will be covering. Sometimes we use large 4x4/SUV vehicles throughout and on some tours we use different modes of transport on certain days (e.g. a 4x4 pick up for a day, a boat, etc.). See the tour-specific information for further details relevant to each tour.

We employ a seat rotation policy on all our Thailand set departure tours, this will ensure everybody has equal opportunities within the vehicle during the tour. Motion sickness will not excuse you from our seat rotation policy and if you are prone to motion sickness (which could be an issue on our [central Thailand](#) and [northern Thailand](#) tours when we encounter winding roads), you should ensure you bring the necessary medication.

We require that you are fit and flexible and can maneuver yourself to the back of the vehicle when it is your turn to sit there. We ask everyone to please be aware of the amount of extra equipment you bring into the general seating area of the vehicle with the aim of not clogging up the access points (for health and safety and comfort).

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

There are no domestic flights required for any of the Thailand tours, as standalone tours, however if you do decide to join more than one tour (highly recommended!) you will require

domestic flights. We can very easily help arrange these for you. Be aware that you may have a lower hold and hand luggage allowance for domestic flights than your international flight between home and Thailand, so you will need to plan accordingly.

LUGGAGE

Due to restricted space in the vehicles please pack as lightly as possible for these tours. A medium, soft-sided duffle bag (not the hard-sided cases) is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles. We recommend a daypack is used to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle or in the field.

ACCOMMODATION

See tour-specific information for further details.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING

Loose, lightweight field clothing with green, brown, or dark colors works best for our birding time and helps us to blend into the forest environments that we will spend most of our time in. Sand and khaki-type colors are fine for when birding coastal areas. Please avoid bright colors for birding attire (for example no pale colors in forests and no white, red, orange etc. anywhere during birding time). Given the potential insect issues in the forest (and fierce tropical sun), we recommend trousers/long pants and long-sleeved shirts (these can be hoisted up should you get too hot). Some people may be more comfortable wearing shorts at the coastal sites, though again please be aware of biting insects and the sun. If we are birding in the grounds of any temples everyone should be covered up appropriately with long pants and long-sleeved shirts.

You will also need to bring some warmer clothing on our central Thailand and northern Thailand birding tours, certainly a minimum of a warm fleece/jacket for early morning/evening when temperatures can be low, and when birding at the higher elevations in the mountains. Something warm to sleep in for the nights when at higher elevation when temperatures could be cold, is also advisable. Rain is always a possibility in Thailand, so rain gear (and a small umbrella) is always worth having.

Casual and informal dress is appropriate for the hotels/accommodation we use. Swimwear can be useful as there may be opportunities to swim at some of the accommodations. Sunglasses, sunhat, and sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) are essential.

Lightweight walking boots are recommended as they give extra ankle support while walking and added protection against animal stings/bites. You might like a pair of sandals/trainers (tennis shoes) for when in vehicles and when walking between your room and restaurant in the hotels.

Please refer to the tour-specific documents for further relevant information regarding clothing.

WHAT TO BRING: OTHER ITEMS

Do not forget: Binoculars, camera, field guide (see “Books” section below), flashlight (torch), spare batteries, converter plugs, plug adaptors, chargers, prescription drugs (please bring the

generic names for these drugs with you), toiletries, prescription glasses (and a spare pair), insect repellent, sunscreen, sunglasses, alarm clock, money pouch, suggested medical kit (as outlined in “Heath and Pests” section above), and daypacks.

Our tour leader/local guide will have a communal telescope for use during the tour. Scopes will be particularly useful on some Thai birding tours over others, such as on our central Thailand tour where a scope will be necessary for looking for shorebirds such as **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**, **Nordmann’s Greenshank**, **White-faced Plover**, and **Asian Dowitcher**. The communal scope will allow everyone opportunities to look at birds briefly on a rotation basis, but if you have your own scope, it would be very useful to bring it along for this tour. If you like to “digi-scope/phone-scope” please bring your own scope to do so, the communal scope will be for everyone to look at the birds but not for taking photos through.

Other important items to remember to bring include key travel documents, passport, cash (or ATM/credit cards to draw money), and proof of vaccinations and your travel or health insurance cards – photocopies of all can be carried by the tour leader in case of emergency. To help with the checklist session, we recommend bringing a couple of different colored pens and a 12-inch (30 centimeter) ruler.

You can read more on what to bring on a birding tour, on this blog post [here](#).

CRIME AND SAFETY

Thailand is generally considered to be a safe country, particularly for the type of tourism activities we will be undertaking on our tour. However, petty theft is a concern in the big cities, tourist areas, and airports, with drive-by motorbike/scooter snatchings of items such as cell phones, cameras, and wallets/handbags being the main targets, for locals and tourists alike, when out walking or when riding in tuk tuks. Be aware of pickpockets. Please use safety/lock boxes, when provided in hotels, for storage of personal possessions like passports, money, and any other valuable items (e.g. jewelry) and follow any advice given to you by the tour leader or the hotel staff.

Lèse-majesté (criticism of the monarchy in any form) is a crime, which can be interpreted broadly and carries a long jail sentence. Be aware that posting images on social media of people drinking alcohol or wearing inappropriate clothing can result in fines and/or imprisonment both for the person who uploaded the images and the people in them. There have been instances where the victims of crime (or people giving negative reviews of hotels on [Tripadvisor](#) etc.) have been identified and threatened with prosecution by the hotel owners/police for damaging their/Thailand’s reputation.

Note the very far southern Thai provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, and the southern portion of Songkhla province close to the Peninsular Malaysia border are subject to regular terrorist attacks. We do not go anywhere near any of these areas on any of our Thai birding tours, or our **Malaysia: Peninsular Malaysia** tour. The wider threat of terrorism is present across the country, particularly in popular tourist areas and large cities like Bangkok, so it is advisable to take care when in public places (as is recommended in every city or tourist area around the world, given the current global situation).

Further details can be found on specific government websites in the “Passport, Visa, and Local Laws” section above.

LANGUAGE

Thai, or Central Thai (historically Siamese), is a Tai language of the Kra–Dai language family spoken by the Central Thai people and a vast majority of Thai Chinese. It is the sole official language of Thailand. There are actually over 70 languages spoken in Thailand. English is widely spoken across the country.

BOOKS

There is one recently published, and excellent, field guide for Thailand and that book is suitable for all our Thai birding tours. See our recommended [field guide blog](#) for further information on this book and the wider region:

Birds of Thailand – Uthai Treesucon and Wich'yanan Limparungpattanakij (2018), Lynx Edicions. We would suggest the Flexibound version of this book for the tour, rather than the hardback version that is also available.

Other bird books relevant to Thailand include:

A Field Guide to the Birds of Thailand – Craig Robson (2016), Bloomsbury Publishing

Birds of South-East Asia – Craig Robson (2018), Helm (Princeton in US).

Collins Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia – Norman Arlott (2017), William Collins (HarperCollins imprint).

A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Thailand – Philip D Round and Wich'yanan Limparungpattanakij (2018), John Beaufoy Publishing.

Pocket Photo Guide to the Birds of Thailand – Michael S Webster and Chew Yen Fook (2018), Bloomsbury Publishing.

Other specific-interest books:

A Field Guide to the Reptiles of Thailand – Tanya Chan-Ard *et al.* (2015), Oxford University Press.

A Field Guide to the Reptiles of South-East Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Bali – Indraneil Das (2015), Bloomsbury Publishing.

A Naturalist's Guide to the Mammals of Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – Chris R Shepherd and Loretta Ann Shepherd (2018), John Beaufoy Publishing.

Field Guide to the Mammals of South-East Asia – Charles M Francis (2019), Bloomsbury Publishing. Second Edition.

A Naturalist's Guide to the Butterflies of Peninsular Malaysia: Singapore and Thailand – Laurence G Kirton (2020), John Beaufoy Publishing. 3rd Edition.

SOUND RECORDINGS

You can listen to and download many Thai bird calls and songs from the highly recommended [xeno-canto](#) website.

USEFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES AND APPS

[Aves Vox](#) – an app enabling you to download bird songs from the [xeno-canto](#) website onto your cell phone.

[eBird](#) – a wealth of information at your fingertips either on your computer, tablet, or cell phone. Sound galleries, photos, and videos are available for almost every species in the world via the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's [Macaulay Library](#).

[Merlin](#) – a good app that can help you work out bird identification by sight and sound (from photos and sound recordings). This app is getting expanded frequently with new information and regional data, so is worth keeping an eye on.

[IOC World Bird List](#) – the website gives all the latest information on world bird taxonomy. You can learn about newly described species, any recent and past splits (creation of a new species) and lumps (deletion of a species) of existing species, and plenty of other great information.

[Lonely Planet](#) – contains loads of information on Thailand. If you are interested in extending your stay in the country before or after the tour (with all the amazing temples Thailand has to offer, a cultural tour is well worth considering), this will help you find some must-see places.



*Numerous kingfishers can be found in [Thailand](#), including **Black-capped Kingfisher**.*