



**JAPAN: PELAGIC TRIP AND MIYAKE-JIMA ENDEMIC
BIRDING EXTENSION**

03 – 05 MARCH 2025



Black-footed Albatross is one of three albatross species possible on this short extension.

This short extension follows on from our two-week **Japan: Spectacular Winter Birds** tour and offers a pelagic birding trip via a ferry crossing to the small island of Miyake-Jima. We will also have a morning on the island looking for endemic, localized, and overwintering species unlikely or less likely to be seen on the main tour.

While our main tour will focus on those famous, stunning, and spectacular birds the country is so well-known for to world birders, such as **Steller's Sea Eagle**, **Blakiston's Fish Owl**, **Hooded Crane**, **White-naped Crane**, **Red-crowned Crane**, and so many more fantastic birds, this tour will look for a very different set of birds such as albatrosses, gulls, cormorants, seaducks, and localized species.

Our first day will see us birding around Tokyo. As we will have just completed our main tour, we will see if there are any species the group has not seen properly yet or if there are any potential new species available to us (we will have also spent a week birding on Honshu – the island home to Tokyo – right at the beginning of the tour). There are sure to be loads of great birding options on offer, Tokyo Bay in the winter is a fantastic birding area, particularly for wildfowl and gulls.



*Gulls abound around Tokyo, such as this **Slaty-backed Gull** (photo Matt Slaymaker).*

In the evening of the first day, we will catch the overnight ferry to Miyake-Jima. “Miyake Island”, as it is also known, is a volcanic island in the Izu archipelago and is located approximately 110 miles (180 kilometers) southeast of Tokyo.

We will arrive on the island in the early morning of the following day and will have the full morning looking for several interesting endemic or localized species that can be found on the island, such as **Izu Thrush**, **Owston's Tit**, and **Japanese Robin**. In the afternoon we will again

depart for Tokyo, but the first half of our journey will be during daylight hours, and this is when we will be in a great zone for pelagic species. Top target species at the time of our tour include **Black-footed Albatross**, **Laysan Albatross**, **Short-tailed Albatross**, and **Tristram's Storm Petrel**. Several other seabird species, cormorants, and gulls are also possible while we are crossing this section of the Philippine Sea. We will arrive back to Tokyo in the evening and following a night in a city hotel we will depart the country the following day.

Itinerary (3 days/2 nights)

Day 1. Birding in Tokyo and evening ferry departure to Miyake-Jima

This is the final day (Day 15) of our **Japan: Spectacular Winter Birds** tour. Those people not taking part in this extension will depart today. Those taking this extension will spend the day birding around Tokyo prior to catching the overnight ferry to Miyake-Jima island.

Our actual plan for the day will, in part, be determined by what we have seen around Japan on the preceding tour, however the Bay of Tokyo and the nearby coastal areas and ports can be checked for a wide range of species. We will seek out a great range of ducks, like **Tufted Duck**, **Common Pochard**, **Northern Pintail**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **Smew**, **Black Scoter**, **Stejneger's Scoter**, and **Harlequin Duck**. **Red-necked Grebe**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **Horned (Slavonian) Grebe**, **Black-necked (Eared) Grebe**, **Red-throated Loon (Diver)**, **Black-throated Loon (Diver)**, **Pelagic Cormorant**, **Great Cormorant**, **Japanese Cormorant**, and **Ancient Murrelet** can also all be on the water here.



Long-tailed Duck is one stunning bird in winter plumage (photo Matt Slaymaker).

One group of birds we might like to look at here are the gulls. Numerous species and subspecies thereof, can be found, including **Slaty-backed Gull**, **Glaucous-winged Gull**, **Mew (Common) Gull**, of the *kamtschatschensis* subspecies, a possible future split as Kamchatka Gull, **Black-legged Kittiwake**, **Black-tailed Gull**, **Vega Gull**, treated as part of the widespread “Herring Gull” complex by some authorities (of either the *vegae* subspecies or the *mongolicus* subspecies – a potential further split as Mongolian Gull), **Black-headed Gull**, **Iceland Gull**, of the *thayeri* subspecies formerly known as Thayers Gull, **Glaucous Gull**, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, of the *heuglini* subspecies split by some as Heuglin’s Gull, and maybe even the rare (classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International) **Saunders’s Gull**. Identifying the gulls here is sure to be an educational, and hopefully, very rewarding experience!



Vega Gull will be one of many gull species encountered around Tokyo (photo Richard Campey).

In addition to the above waterfowl, seabirds and gulls, we will also likely pick up an interesting range of other birds around the waterbodies, such as **Common Kingfisher**, **Brown-cheeked Rail**, **Common Moorhen**, **Eurasian Coot**, **Ruddy-breasted Crake**, **Grey Heron**, **Great Egret**, **Intermediate Egret**, **Little Egret**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Eurasian Spoonbill**, or maybe even the Endangered (BirdLife International) **Black-faced Spoonbill**. Shorebirds such as **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, **Kentish Plover**, **Long-billed Plover**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Common Greenshank**, **Dunlin**, **Common Snipe**, and **Eurasian Curlew** could feature, and raptors hunting in the area could include **Western Osprey**, **Eastern Marsh Harrier**, **Common Kestrel**, and **Peregrine Falcon**.

Parklands, woodlands, and gardens around Tokyo offer some great birdwatching during the winter and possible species to see include **Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Japanese Green Woodpecker**, **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, **Bull-headed Shrike**, **Eurasian Jay**, **Azure-winged Magpie**, **Varied Tit**, **Japanese Tit**, **Brown-eared Bulbul**, **Warbling White-eye**, **White-**

cheeked Starling, Brown-headed Thrush, Pale Thrush, Dusky Thrush, Red-flanked Bluetail, Blue Rock Thrush, Grey Wagtail, Japanese Wagtail, White Wagtail, (Japanese) Buff-bellied Pipit, Hawfinch, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Meadow Bunting, Common Reed Bunting, Rustic Bunting, Black-faced Bunting, and Grey Bunting. There is lots on offer here!



Japanese Wagtail is one of the localized passerines that can be found around Tokyo (photo Matt Slaymaker).

In the evening we will catch the overnight ferry from Tokyo to Miyake-Jima. Our night will be spent in comfortable cabins onboard.

Overnight: On ferry

Day 2. Miyake-Jima endemic birding then afternoon ferry departure to Tokyo (pelagic birding from ferry)

We will arrive at Sabigahama Port in Miyake-Jima early in the early morning where we may spot a range of gulls, such as those listed for Day 1, and other species like **Japanese Cormorant**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, and **Meadow Bunting**.

We will then have until lunchtime on the island looking for the special birds found here. Top of the list will be **Izu Thrush**, **Owston's Tit**, **Japanese Robin**, **Japanese Wood Pigeon**, and **Grey Bunting**. One of the best sites on the island is the area surrounding Tairo-ike in the south of the island (this is an important breeding ground for the rare Ijima's Leaf Warbler during the summer, but they won't be present during our stay, they will likely be overwintering further south in Taiwan or The Philippines). Other species we could discover during our time on the island include **Oriental Turtle Dove**, **Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Bull-headed Shrike**, **Large-**

billed Crow, Japanese Tit, Brown-eared Bulbul, Japanese Bush Warbler, Warbling White-eye, Eurasian Wren, Pale Thrush, Red-flanked Bluetail, Eurasian Bullfinch, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Eurasian Siskin, Meadow Bunting, and Black-faced Bunting.



***Pale Thrush** is one of several thrush species we will be looking for on Miyake-Jima, the others being Izu Thrush and Brown-headed Thrush (photo Richard Campey).*

In the early afternoon we will depart Sabigahama Port on Miyake-Jima for our return ferry trip back to Tokyo. The first part of this pelagic trip will be during daylight hours through a good area for pelagic species. During this section of the crossing, we will look for **Black-footed Albatross, Short-tailed Albatross, and Laysan Albatross**. At this time of year, we also have a good chance of seeing **Tristram's Storm Petrel** (this is a winter-breeding seabird species). Other pelagic species we might encounter include **Streaked Shearwater, Northern Fulmar, Pomarine Jaeger** (Skua), and **Pelagic Cormorant**. A wide range of gulls are also possible in this section of water so we will grill those, as opportunities arise, though our prime focus will be on observing the three species of albatross and other truly pelagic species, as this is a great opportunity to see them. Hopefully this pelagic birding will provide a great end to our short extension. We will arrive in Tokyo in the early evening and have a final dinner together.

Overnight: Tokyo

Day 3. Departure from Tokyo

Time at leisure prior to your international departure from Tokyo (please see the important note below regarding your departure).

Overnight: Not included



Pelagic Cormorant can be found around Tokyo and should be seen on this extension.



Northern Fulmar is one of several pelagic species possible during the ferry crossing.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as weather conditions, availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors (such as health and safety). In addition, we sometimes must use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration: 3 days / 2 nights
Group Size: 10 - 12
Dates: 03 - 05 March 2025
Start: Tokyo
End: Tokyo
Prices: Japanese Yen ¥ TBC per person sharing – based on 10 - 12 participants
-- New 2025 tour details coming soon

Single Supplements: Japanese Yen ¥ TBC (2025)

If the boat trip is cancelled, we should be able to refund some of the refundable items purchased (such as the ferry ticket) after the tour.

In the event of fewer than ten participants signing up to the tour there will be the option of a surcharge to guarantee departure. The amount of the surcharge will depend on how many participants are signed up to the tour and will occur if all participants agree.

Price includes:

All accommodation (Day 1 until Day 2 as described above, or similar – note one night is spent on an inter-island ferry)
Meals (from breakfast on Day 1 (included as part of the main tour) until breakfast on Day 3)
Drinking water – please bring a refillable water bottle
Expert tour leader
Local bird and wildlife guide fees
Birdwatching site entrance fees (including all national park fees) and travel permits
Boat trips as referred to in itinerary
All ground transport and tolls/taxes while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

International flights to and from Tokyo (Honshu)
Expenditures due to flight/ferry cancellations/delays or other causes beyond our control (force majeure)
Visa fees if visa required

Departure tax

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls etc.

Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding/sightseeing excursions

Soft/alcoholic drinks

Personal travel insurance

Customary gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

Important Note:

We will keep the hotel in Tokyo booked for the two nights of this extension, even though we plan on being on the ferry for one night as we sail between Tokyo and Miyake-Jima island. This will allow you to leave the majority of your belongings in the hotel rather than take them on the boat trip. It will also provide a safety net regarding accommodation should we have a boat cancellation (see below).

The boat usually (and currently) leaves Tokyo at 22:30hrs and arrives in Miyake-Jima at 05:00hrs. The ferry then leaves Miyake-Jima at 13:35hrs arriving back in Tokyo at 19:40hrs.

During the winter there is a moderate chance that the ferry service might get cancelled due to poor weather. If that happens, we have an alternative plan for Day 2, that will involve some further birding in the Tokyo area. We will only have the one chance for the pelagic and island birding trip (Day 1 into Day 2). If the weather prevents the trip we will be unable to go and we are unable to reschedule the trip (we should be able to offer a refund from the ferry if the trip in cancelled due to poor weather).

There is a small chance that if the weather deteriorates while we are on the island we may need to spend a night on the island unexpectedly. In this rare scenario, we might not get back to Tokyo at the time/date planned in the itinerary. It would therefore be prudent to book an extra night in Tokyo for the night of Day 3 (not included in the tour cost) and then have an international flight booked for the following day (i.e.: 24hrs later than in this itinerary). We can help book that extra 'security' night if you wish, in the same hotel, and we can also arrange additional birding or sightseeing excursions in Tokyo, if you should wish to explore this fascinating city, or just relax after an exciting few weeks winter birding in Japan.

You could also opt to fly out of Tokyo on Day 3 if you wish, as indicated in the itinerary. It is impossible to predict whether the weather will cause any issues with this short extension until the day before/day of this tour. We will of course monitor the situation and check with the ferry operator ahead of time to try and reduce any chance of issues due to cancellations and delays, though those factors are clearly out of our hands.