



**SOUTHERN THAILAND BIRDING TOUR:
JEWELS OF THE SOUTH**

17 FEBRUARY – 02 MARCH 2025



Malayan Banded Pitta is one of our spectacular targets on this trip.

The peninsula of southern Thailand, part of geological Sundaland, is a birders' and naturalists' paradise. Bounded by the Gulf of Thailand to the east and the Andaman Sea to the west, this lush tropical region boasts a maritime climate and a unique combination of terrestrial and marine attractions that rank among the best globally. Our extra-small, small-group tour is designed to search for the region's special birds in some spectacular and unique limestone karst scenery. This tour will depart with a minimum of just four, and a maximum of only six participants.

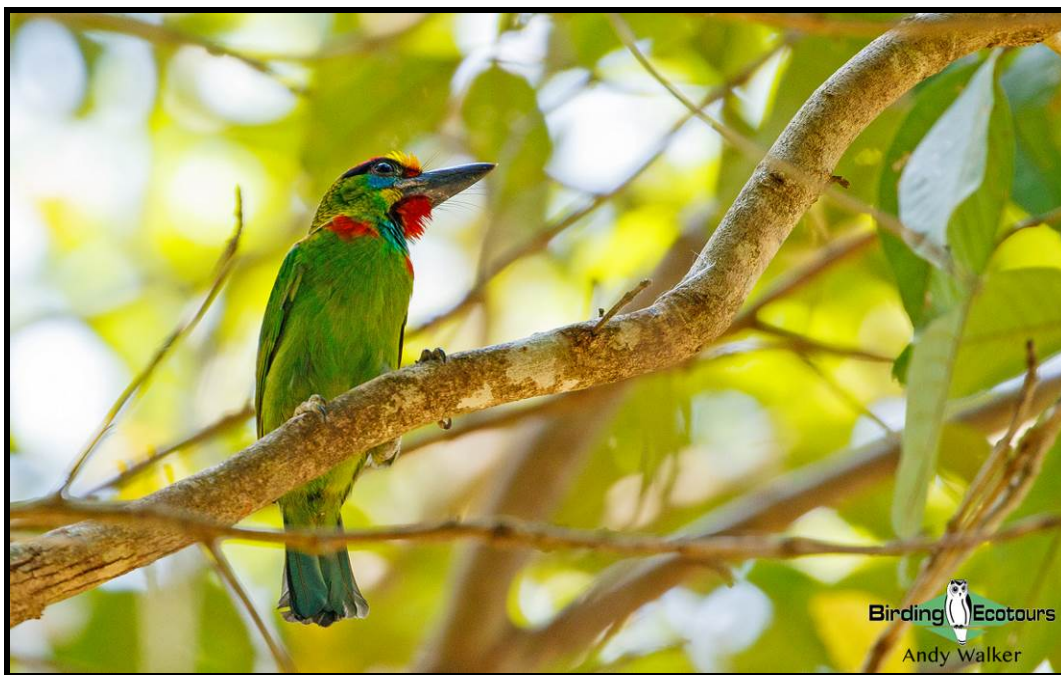
There are numerous special avian treats in southern Thailand, from several spectacular families, such as pittas, kingfishers, trogons, malkohas, hornbills, barbets, bee-eaters, and broadbills, including such beauties as **Malayan Banded Pitta**, **Mangrove Pitta**, (Gurney's Pitta is now regrettably considered extirpated from Thailand), **Great Hornbill**, **White-crowned Hornbill**, **Helmeted Hornbill** (now considered Critically Endangered by BirdLife International), **Bushy-crested Hornbill**, **Green Broadbill**, **Banded Broadbill**, **Black-and-yellow Broadbill**, **Black-and-red Broadbill**, **Rail-babbler**, **Scarlet-rumped Trogon**, **Orange-breasted Trogon**, **Red-throated Barbet**, **Golden-whiskered Barbet**, **Chestnut-breasted Malkoha**, **Red-billed Malkoha**, **Banded Kingfisher**, **Rufous-collared Kingfisher**, **Brown-winged Kingfisher**, **Ruddy Kingfisher**, **Malayan Blue-banded Kingfisher**, and **Red-bearded Bee-eater**.



*The sight of a male **Green Broadbill** will likely leave you speechless, it's a stunner.*

We visit a range of national parks to find the above specials, picking up scores of ornately colored woodpeckers, unique jungle-living babblers and bulbuls, attractive leafbirds, interesting spiderhunters, and other sought-after species along the way. We may encounter intriguing jungle mammals too, including **Dusky Langur**, **Southern Pig-tailed Macaque**, the aptly named **Black Giant Squirrel**, the beautiful **Lar** (White-handed) **Gibbon**, and, with some luck, the nocturnal **Bengal Slow Loris**. We will also visit the stunning reservoir at Khao Sok National Park, surrounded by one of the oldest primary forests in Southeast Asia and some of the most

spectacular scenery in all of Thailand. This tropical birding adventure, set amid extraordinary karst limestone landscapes and rich tropical seas, is one not to be missed!



Red-throated Barbet is a target while we are birding in southern Thailand.

This southern Thailand birdwatching tour can easily be combined with our other Thai birding tours, these cover the north and central regions of the country, and offer some amazing birds, including **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**, **Nordmann's Greenshank**, **Mrs. Hume's Pheasant**, **Blue Pitta**, **Eared Pitta**, **Rusty-naped Pitta**, **Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo**, and many more exceptional birds. Furthermore, this southern Thailand birding tour combines perfectly with our thrilling **Southern and Central Vietnam: Endemics and Regional Specials** tour, which runs immediately after this tour (it's just a short flight between Phuket and Ho Chi Minh City) and features some simply magical birds like **Germain's Peacock-Pheasant**, **Bar-bellied Pitta**, **Blue-rumped Pitta**, **Indochinese Green Magpie**, **Golden-winged Laughingthrush**, **Collared Laughingthrush**, **Grey-crowned Crocias**, and so much more.

Detailed Itinerary (14 days/13 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Phuket

Arrival in Phuket, where we will meet at our hotel for our group evening welcome meal together. Day at leisure, after your arrival.

Overnight: Phuket

Day 2. Birding at Khao Phra Thaeo and Phang Nga

Morning birding at Khao Phra Thaeo National Park on Phuket Island for an introduction to the birdlife of southern Thailand. Here we are likely to have our first sightings of species like **Stripe-throated** and **Yellow-vented Bulbuls**, **Scarlet-backed** and **Orange-bellied Flowerpeckers**, and **Crimson Sunbird**, with **Coppersmith Barbet**, **Red-throated Barbet**, and **Blue-eared Barbet** also possible. Other potential species here may include the dazzling **Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher** and overwintering **Forest Wagtail**.

In the late morning we will drive toward Phang Nga, situated on the idyllic Phang Nga Bay, where we will have lunch and check into our hotel for the night. After lunch we will visit the local mangroves to look for specials such as **Brown-winged Kingfisher**, **Ruddy Kingfisher**, **Streak-breasted Woodpecker**, **Chestnut-bellied Malkoha**, and the gorgeous **Mangrove Pitta**.

Overnight: Phang Nga



*We hope to repeat the quality views of **Mangrove Pitta** we have had during our previous tours!*

Day 3. Birding Phang-Nga Province

We will spend the early morning birding in a town park, which offers loads of great birds, such as **Banded Woodpecker**, **Black-thighed Falconet**, and **Blue-tailed Bee-eater**. We will also continue our exploration of the vast mangroves of the area, where we will be looking for exotic birds such as malkohas, kingfishers, and broadbills, maybe even **Mangrove Whistler**.

After lunch we will move to Thai Mueang, where we will search for **Oriental Dollarbird** (in the roller family), **Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker**, and the diminutive **Vernal Hanging Parrot**. We are also likely to see a range of more common species such as **Red-wattled Lapwing** and **Lesser Whistling Duck** here. Seasonal wetlands or rice paddies we pass by may support herons,

bitterns, or egrets, as well as **Watercock** and **White-breasted Waterhen**, and if we see any suitable habitat, we will take a look, if time permits (noting we will spend time in similar vast habitat on Day 10 looking for wetland birds). Our third stop along the way to Khao Sok is one of southern Thailand's shorebird meccas. **Terek Sandpiper** is the main attraction here, together with **Greater** and **Lesser (Tibetan) Sand Plovers**, **Red-necked Stint**, and **Grey-tailed Tattler**. At the end of the day we will move north to the Khura Buri, Si Phang Nga area.

Overnight: Si Phang Nga

Day 4. Birding Si Phang Nga National Park

An early morning start will see us enjoying the sunrise over the beautiful limestone crags as we head toward Si Phang Nga National Park, where we will spend the majority of the day, as well as the following morning, birding. Si Phang Nga National Park is home to the prodigious **Helmeted Hornbill**, as well as flocks of **Bushy-crested Hornbill**, and the immaculate **Great Hornbill**. The skies above the stream that flows through Si Phang Nga should produce the obscure **Whiskered Treeswift** and **Silver-rumped Spinetail**. **Chestnut-naped Forktail** occurs here, as does the range-restricted **Lesser Fish Eagle**. This national park is an excellent location for both **Malayan Banded Pitta**, reputed to be Thailand's most dazzling pitta, and **Banded Broadbill**, itself rather dapper, with other impressive birds including **Black-and-yellow Broadbill**, **Orange-headed Thrush**, and **Chinese Blue Flycatcher**. Other potential species here include **Little Spiderhunter**, **Thick-billed Spiderhunter**, and **Purple-naped Sunbird**.

Overnight: Si Phang Nga



*If we are lucky enough to see the Critically Endangered (BirdLife International) **Helmeted Hornbill**, it is sure to be a tour highlight.*

Day 5. Birding Si Phang Nga National Park and travel to Khao Sok National Park area

We will have another morning birding at Si Phang Nga National Park, where we will continue our search for the special birds of the area, and some of the species possible might include **Large Blue Flycatcher**, **Blyth's Frogmouth**, **Gould's Frogmouth**, **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle**, **Brown Wood Owl**, **Raffles's Malkoha**, **Grey-bellied Bulbul**, **Streaked Bulbul**, **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch**, **Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher**, **Crow-billed Drongo**, **Blue-winged Leafbird**, and **Lesser Green Leafbird**.



Large Blue Flycatcher is a difficult species to connect with globally, but some birds do overwinter in southern Thailand, and we will be looking out for them on this tour.

After lunch we will drive to Khao Sok. Along the way we will look at some river crossings, marshy grassland, and agricultural land, where we may find **River Lapwing**, **Grey-headed Lapwing**, **Red-wattled Lapwing**, along with kingfishers, shrikes, bee-eaters, and potentially some resident and migrant pipits as well as some migrant shorebirds.

Overnight: Khao Sok

Day 6. Birding Khao Sok National Park

We will have a morning session birding the river section of Khao Sok National Park. Here we search for the elusive **Banded**, **Rufous-collared**, and **Malayan Blue-banded Kingfishers**. The dense jungle here is also a good spot to get to grips with a range of babblers, including **Pin-striped Tit-Babbler**, **Chestnut-winged Babbler**, **Malayan Black-capped Babbler**, and **Spot-necked Babbler**. A range of woodpeckers occur here, including the flashy **Maroon** and **Bamboo Woodpeckers**, and the tiny **White-browed Piculet**, as well as other forest birds like

Grey-breasted Spiderhunter. This is one of the sites where we will search for the gaudy **Chestnut-naped Forktail** as well as for **Black-and-red Broadbill** and **Raffles's Malkoha**. With luck we might also spot some interesting animals, like **Wagler's Keeled Green Pit Viper**.

We return to our lodge for lunch before we drive to the nearby Ratchaprapha Dam (Lake Ratchaprapha), where we will board a longboat to take us to our floating accommodation. The boat ride between the pier and our accommodation will take approximately 90 minutes. Between the limestone cliffs that tower hundreds of meters above us, we will search for **White-bellied Sea Eagle**, **Oriental Hobby**, **Lesser Fish Eagle**, and **Grey-headed Fish Eagle**. After checking into our floating accommodation, we will make a boat-based excursion on the lake which will provide excellent vistas into the jungle and gives us one of our best chances of sightings of **Helmeted**, **Great**, **Bushy-crested**, and **White-crowned Hornbills**, as well as woodpeckers like **Greater** and **Common Flamebacks**. In addition, jungle mammals like **Dusky Langur** and **Lar** (White-handed) **Gibbon**, which utters a beautifully haunting call from the jungle canopy, are likely. This is possibly the most scenic spot in Thailand too.

Overnight: Lake Ratchaprapha

Day 7. Birding Khao Sok National Park to Tha Sala

We will head onto the lake for a dawn wildlife cruise and will look for **Helmeted Hornbill** and all the other possible hornbill species of the area, a range of kingfisher such as **Stork-billed Kingfisher**, **Black-capped Kingfisher**, **Blue-eared Kingfisher**, and exciting raptors such as **Bat Hawk**, **Lesser Fish Eagle**, and **Oriental Hobby**. We will be out on the water most of the morning, returning to the pier in time for lunch.



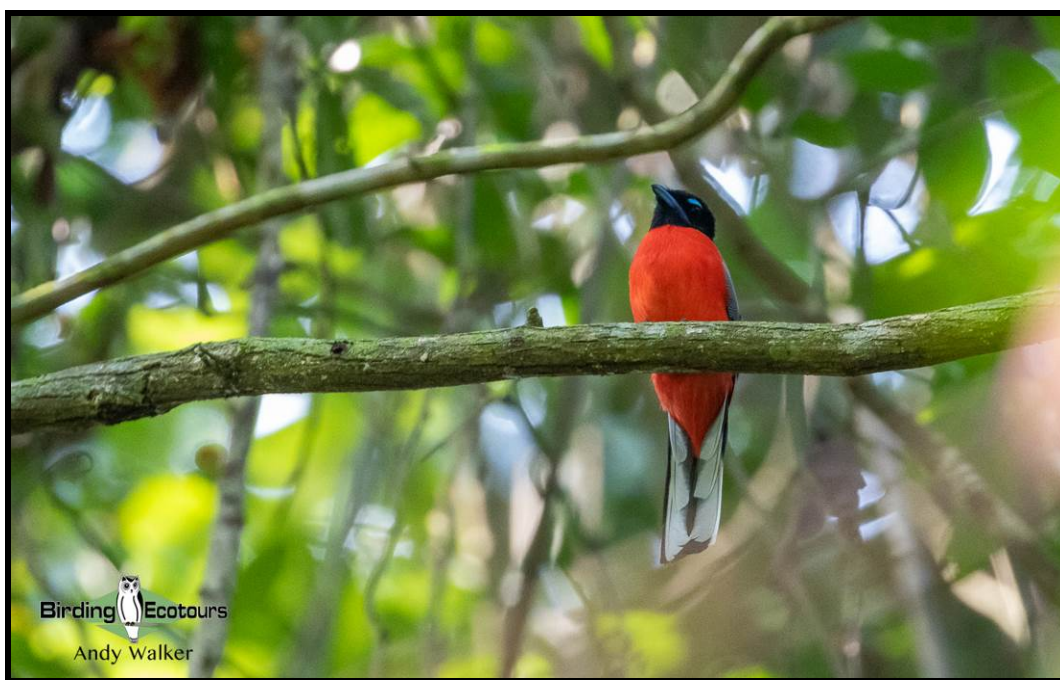
*The gorgeous **Blue-eared Kingfisher** is one of several kingfisher species possible at Lake Ratchaprapha and on this southern Thailand tour in general.*

After lunch we will drive to the Tha Sala area, our base for the next two nights for birding the nearby Khao Luang (Krung Ching) National Park on the eastern side of the Peninsula.

Overnight: Tha Sala

Day 8. Birding Khao Luang (Krung Ching) National Park

The rainforest at Khao Luang National Park holds a plethora of special birds that we will be looking for during our time here. These include **White-crowned Forktail**, **Scarlet-rumped Trogon**, **Orange-breasted Trogon**, the petite **Rufous Piculet**, the range-restricted **Crested Jayshrike** (now a monotypic family), **Rail-babbler** (a very rare monotypic family that requires immense luck here, but is possibly much easier in Borneo), **Green**, **Black-and-yellow**, **Sooty**, and **Dusky Broadbills**, **Malayan Banded Pitta**, **Banded Kingfisher**, **Scarlet Minivet**, **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**, **Helmeted Hornbill**, and breeding **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle**.



*The gorgeous **Scarlet-rumped Trogon** is sure to be a highlight bird, it is so beautiful.*

During our day birding here, we will spend some time on the main waterfall trail, looking and listening for the elusive **Rail-babbler** and other secretive forest birds, such as **Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler**, **Chestnut-winged Babbler**, **Moustached Babbler**, and **Black-throated Babbler**. Around the headquarters area we will be looking for forest-edge birds and others visiting fruiting or flowering trees, such as **Golden-whiskered Barbet**, **Blue-eared Barbet**, **Scaly-breasted Bulbul**, **Hairy-backed Bulbul**, **Spectacled Bulbul**, **Asian Red-eyed Bulbul**, **Black-crested Bulbul**, **Black-headed Bulbul**, **Black-naped Monarch**, **Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo**, **Orange-bellied Flowerpecker**, and **Yellow-eared Spiderhunter**.

Overnight: Tha Sala

Day 9. Birding Khao Luang (Krung Ching) and the wetlands of Thale Noi

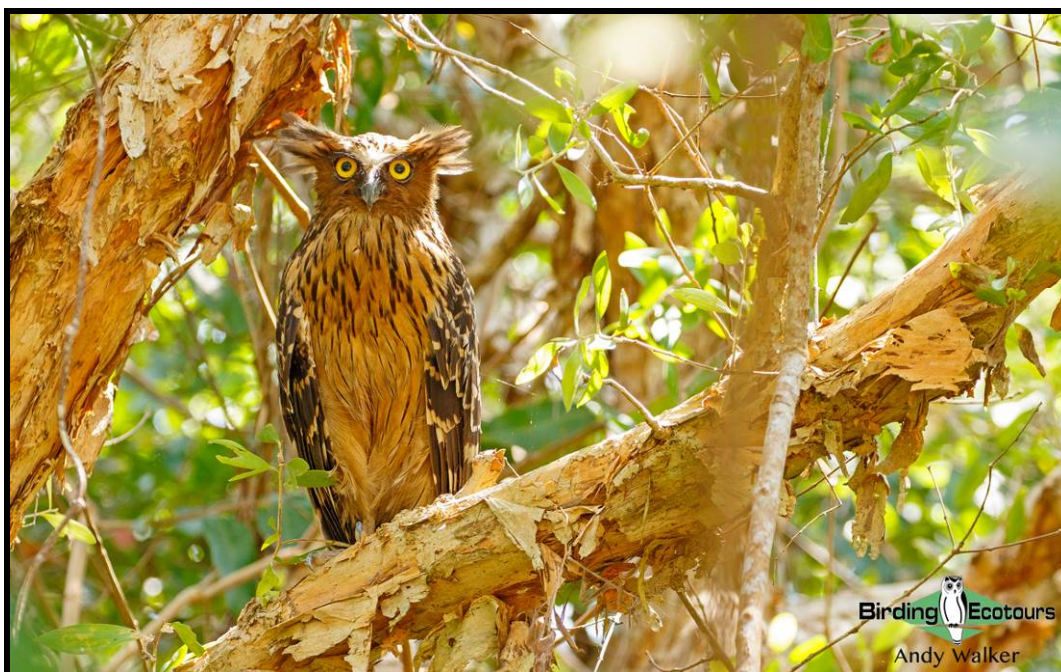
During our final morning birding session at Khao Luang we will walk the entrance road, where we might find some different species from those of the previous day, such as **Red-billed Malkoha**, **Chestnut-breasted Malkoha**, **Raffles's Malkoha**, **Black-and-yellow Broadbill**, **Banded Broadbill**, **Black Baza**, **Lesser Cuckooshrike**, **Great Iora**, **Ruby-cheeked Sunbird**, **Greater Green Leafbird**, **Spectacled Spiderhunter**, and **Crimson Sunbird**.

In the late morning we will drive to our next base in the Thale Noi area. Here we will spend the afternoon at leisure around our accommodation in our comfortable resort.

Overnight: Thale Noi

Day 10. Birding Thale Noi

We will spend the day birding around Thale Noi, it will be great to be in open habitat after a lot of forest birding over previous days. Sometimes **Buffy Fish Owl** can be found roosting or nesting near our accommodation along the lake, and if we are lucky enough to find one it is sure to be another highlight.



*While birding around the lake we will keep our eyes peeled for **Buff-bellied Fish Owl**.*

In the wetlands around the edge of the lake we will look for **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, **Bronze-winged Jacana**, **Grey-headed Swamphehen**, **Lesser Whistling Duck**, **Garganey**, **Cotton Pygmy Goose**, or the rare (at least in this part of Thailand) **Painted Stork**.

We will sit out the heat of the middle of the day, maybe enjoying the resort's spa or pool facilities, and then in the late afternoon we will visit a recent conservation initiative for the

protection of the rare and localized (in Thailand) **Knob-billed Duck**. The management of rice paddies for this species here has resulted in a wonderful mosaic of habitats for a wide range of species that also make use of the lake, paddies, and nearby fish farms. Some of the species we will hope to find while birding the area include **Bronze-winged** and **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas**, **Cotton Pygmy Goose**, **Yellow Bittern**, **Purple Heron**, **Stork-billed Kingfisher**, **Chinese Pond Heron**, **Eastern Marsh Harrier**, **Black-headed Ibis**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Indian Cormorant**, **Oriental Darter**, **Grey-headed Swampphen**, **Slaty-breasted Rail**, **White-browed Crake**, **Whiskered Tern**, and with luck some interesting shorebirds such as **Oriental Pratincole**, **Long-toed Stint**, **Wood Sandpiper**, and **Grey-headed Lapwing**. Passerines around the area might include **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler**, **Amur Stonechat**, **White-headed Munia**, **Jungle Myna**, **Siamese Pied Myna**, **Great Myna**, **Plain-backed Sparrow**, and **Asian Golden Weaver**.

Overnight: Thale Noi

Day 11. Birding Trang Peninsular Botanic Garden and Khao Nor Chu Chi (KNCC)

After breakfast we will leave our accommodation and commence our journey towards Khao Nor Chu Chi (KNCC). We will spend most of the day birding in and around the Peninsular Botanic Garden near Trang, which is home to a small peat swamp and a lot of good birds. Here we can potentially see **Red-billed Malkoha**, **Indian Cuckoo**, **Large Hawk-Cuckoo**, **Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo**, **Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher**, **Banded Woodpecker**, **Rufous Piculet**, **Great Iora**, **Green Iora**, **Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike**, **Van Hasselt's Sunbird**, and **Spectacled Spiderhunter**, as well as plenty of other interesting species, maybe even the localized **Red-crowned Barbet**.



*There are many attractive woodpeckers possible on this southern Thailand birding tour, and **Banded Woodpeckers** are possibly one of the best.*

In the afternoon we will continue towards Khao Nor Chu Chi, our base for the next two nights. We will perhaps visit a nearby trail in the late afternoon, or look for some birds around the lodge grounds, where we might find **Brown-throated Sunbird**, **White-throated Kingfisher**, **Red-throated Barbet**, **Great Myna**, **Orange-bellied Flowerpecker**, **Asian Koel**, or **Banded Woodpecker**.

Our after-dinner outing at Khao Nor Chu Chi will be in search of **Great Eared** and **Large-tailed Nightjars** as well as **Oriental Bay Owl**, and we may also find other nocturnal species such as **Brown Wood Owl**, **Sunda Scops Owl**, or **Barred Eagle-Owl**, maybe even an interesting reptile or mammal too, such as **Bengal Slow Loris**.

Overnight: Khao Nor Chu Chi



*It is rare and highly secretive, but **Oriental Bay Owl** is one of several nocturnal species we will be looking for while birding at Khao Nor Chu Chi in southern Thailand.*

Day 12. Birding Khao Nor Chu Chi / Khao Pra-Bang Khram Wildlife Sanctuary

Sadly, Gurney's Pitta is no longer seen at Khao Nor Chu Chi (also known as Khao Pra-Bang Khram Wildlife Sanctuary), but the area is still definitely well worth visiting, as it is the only remaining lowland forest in southern Thailand and home to a profusion of exciting birds. During our stay here we will search for flamboyance in the form of **Orange-breasted** and **Scarlet-rumped Trogons**, **Red-crowned Barbet**, **Red-throated Barbet**, **Vernal Hanging Parrot**, **Chestnut-bellied** and **Raffles's Malkohas**, **Crested Jayshrike**, **Malayan Banded Pitta** (possibly even an early retuning migrant **Hooded** or **Blue-winged Pitta** if we're really lucky), **Black-and-yellow Broadbill**, **Green Broadbill**, **Rufous-collared** and **Oriental Dwarf Kingfishers**, **Common Hill Myna**, **Van Hasselt's Sunbird**, and **Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher**. There are some seriously spectacular birds here and we will try and find as many as possible!

Less gaudy, but as impressive for the Asian birding connoisseur, are many species of cryptically marked babblers, including **Ferruginous Babbler**, **Rufous-crowned Babbler**, **Malayan Black-capped Babbler**, and **Spot-necked Babbler**, while **Buff-rumped Woodpecker** is exquisite in the subtlety of its markings, and numerous bulbuls can be found with patience, including **Cream-vented Bulbul** and **Puff-backed Bulbul**. Globally there are only two species of philentomas in the world, **Maroon-breasted Philentoma** and **Rufous-winged Philentoma**, both occur here, though they are not common and will take some luck. Khao Nor Chu Chi is also one of the very few places where the enigmatically elusive **Giant Pitta** has been sighted, but we will need extreme luck to find one of those (it can be found a touch more easily on our [Sabah, Borneo bird tour](#), but it's a tough bird to connect with anywhere in its range)!

Overnight: Khao Nor Chu Chi



*The song of **Malayan Black-capped Babbler** can be heard at Khao Nor Chu Chi, seeing this ground-dwelling species takes some patience though.*

Day 13. Khao Nor Chu Chi to Phuket

We will have another morning birding around Khao Nor Chu Chi, looking for the aforementioned species along with others such as **Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo**, **Hairy-backed Bulbul**, **Yellow-bellied Bulbul**, **Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker**, **Yellow-vented Flowerpecker**, **Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker**, and plenty more.

After lunch we will check out of our accommodation and commence our drive back to Phuket, where we will have a final meal together and tackle the difficult and fun task of selecting a 'Bird of the Trip', never an easy job.

Overnight: Phuket

Day 14. Phuket International Airport, tour concludes

A non-birding day at leisure before your onward journey. The tour concludes with departure from Phuket International Airport.

Overnight: Not included

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 availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration: 14 days

Group Size: 4 - 6

Dates: 17 February - 02 March 2025

Start: Phuket International Airport, Phuket

End: Phuket International Airport, Phuket

Prices: US\$7,795 per person sharing – based on 4 - 6 participants (2025)

Single Supplements: US\$995 (2025)

Price includes:

Meals (from evening meal on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 14)

Bottled water (please bring a refillable water bottle)

Accommodation as shown (based on two participants sharing)

Guiding fees

All entrance fees to national parks, nature reserves, bird blinds/hides, etc.

All ground transport while on tour

Toll fees

Price excludes:

International flights to and from Phuket where tour starts and ends

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access when no free WiFi available, etc. Alcoholic and soft drinks

Personal insurance

Visa fees if applicable

Gratuities