

Andaman & Western Ghats Endemic Birding Tour 2026

December 5-20, 2026



ANDAMAN & WESTERN GHATS ENDEMIC BIRDING TOUR 2026

Duration: 15 Nights / 16 Days

This 16-day birding journey unites two of India's richest endemic zones—the Andaman Islands and the Western Ghats. Starting in the tropical rainforests of the Andamans, where island endemics abound, we then head to the sholas, grasslands, and evergreen forests of the Western Ghats. Traversing altitudes from sea level to over 2,600 metres, we pursue over 100 endemic and near-endemic bird species, from the elusive Andaman Crake to the highland-dwelling Nilgiri Pipit. This is a tour for keen birders and nature lovers alike, blending diversity, adventure, and the chance to witness India's rarest avian treasures in their natural habitats.

Day 1: 5 December 2026 – Port Blair – Chidiya Tapu & Mount Harriet National Park (Elevation: Sea level) – Chidiya Tapu & Mount Harriet National Park (Elevation: Sea level)



Chidiya Tapu and Mount Harriet lie within South Andaman, offering access to some of the island's richest lowland evergreen forests. Chidiya Tapu, a coastal forest system blending tropical moist evergreen trees with mangroves and littoral scrub, serves as a stronghold for island endemics like the Andaman Crake and Andaman Treepie. Mount Harriet, with slightly higher elevation and denser forest interior, hosts elusive canopy dwellers and nocturnal species. Combined, these habitats hold over 20 endemic birds and a range of regional specialities. These forests are critical remnants of the Indo-Burmese biogeographic region, with rich biodiversity and high levels of avian endemism.

Target Species: Andaman Woodpecker, Andaman Crake, Andaman Wood Pigeon, Andaman Shama, Andaman Coucal, Andaman Treepie, Andaman Drongo, Andaman Serpent Eagle, Andaman White-headed Starling, Black-naped Oriole, Olive-backed Sunbird, Long-tailed Parakeet, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Collared Kingfisher. Night species: Andaman Scops Owl, Andaman Hawk Owl, Hume's Hawk Owl.



Day 2: 6 December 2026 – Ferrargunj Forest Reserve & Sippy Ghat (Elevation: 20–50 m | Distance: ~35 km round trip) Forest Reserve & Sippy Ghat (Elevation: 20–50 m | Distance: ~35 km round trip)

Located inland from Port Blair, Ferrargunj Forest Reserve features undisturbed tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forests with seasonal swamps. These forests are quieter and denser than coastal sites, making them ideal for species preferring interior habitats. The terrain of forested hills and valley bottoms supports endemics like the Andaman Drongo and Andaman Cuckooshrike. The adjacent Sippy Ghat wetlands, a

shallow freshwater marsh, provide feeding grounds for a wide variety of migratory and resident shorebirds. These contrasting habitats offer a rewarding combination of forest canopy specialists and open-area waders within a single day, making it one of the most productive areas near Port Blair.

Target Species: Andaman Teal, Andaman Cuckooshrike, Andaman Drongo, Edible-nest Swiftlet, Sandpipers, Snipes, Plovers, Oriental Scops Owl (Andaman race), Hume's Hawk Owl.

Day 3: 7 December 2026 – Mount Harriet or Chidiya Tapu (Elevation: 150–200 m) or Chidiya Tapu (Elevation: 150–200 m)

Depending on target species, we return to either Mount Harriet or Chidiya Tapu to complete our checklist of Andaman endemics. Mount Harriet offers shaded ridges and mossy undergrowth perfect for canopy specialists and shy understory birds, while Chidiya Tapu's mixed habitats provide second chances for the elusive Andaman Crake or Andaman Wood Pigeon. These forests are among the best remaining examples of lowland evergreen rainforest in the Andamans, with high moisture and rich stratification. In the evening, the area around Chidiya Tapu becomes active with nocturnal birds, adding nightjars and owls to our list.

Target Species: Andaman Wood Pigeon, Andaman Nightjar, Andaman Barn Owl, Andaman Cuckoo Dove, Andaman Flowerpecker.

Day 4: 8 December 2026 – Shoal Bay (Elevation: Sea level) (Elevation: Sea level)

Shoal Bay lies on the southeastern edge of South Andaman Island, facing the coastal inlets and mangrove-lined waterways of the archipelago. This unique coastal forest features a combination of moist evergreen forest and tidal swamp, making it an excellent site for species that favour dense lowland cover. Its patchwork of muddy banks, creeks, and lush green canopy often yields sightings of Ruddy Kingfisher and Andaman-specific flycatchers and thrushes. Due to its quiet and remote nature, it also offers refuge to several elusive and skittish species not easily found elsewhere.



Target Species: Ruddy Kingfisher, Andaman Flowerpecker, Andaman Bulbul, Orange-headed Thrush, Olive-backed Sunbird, Dollarbird.

Day 5: 9 December 2026 – Mount Harriet and Shoal Bay – Fly to Coimbatore –

A final birding session in either Mount Harriet or Shoal Bay will help round out the Andaman checklist. We aim to target any species missed during the previous outings, especially those that prefer dense, high-canopy or riparian forest environments. Following this, we board an evening flight to the Indian mainland, arriving in Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, the gateway to the Western Ghats sector of our birding expedition.

Target Species: Clean-up of any remaining Andaman endemics.

Day 6: 10 December 2026 – Coimbatore – Kallungal Grasslands (Elevation: 400 m) – Kallungal Grasslands (Elevation: 400 m)

The semi-arid plains and rocky scrubland around Kallungal, just outside Coimbatore, are home to a set of dry zone specialists. Dominated by open grassland, Acacia scrub, and scattered granite outcrops, this habitat contrasts sharply with the forests of the Andamans. Birding here is particularly fruitful in the late afternoon and evening when crepuscular and nocturnal species become active. The sparse vegetation allows for excellent visibility, and the rocky escarpments often harbour roosting owls and coursers.

Target Species: Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Indian Courser, Great Thick-knee, Sykes's Lark, Indian Eagle Owl, Singing Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Indian Nightjar, Yellow-wattled Lapwing.

Day 7: 11 December 2026 – Puliampatti Grasslands – Drive to Ooty (79 km | 2 hr 45 min | Elevation: 2,240 m) Grasslands – Drive to Ooty (79 km | 2 hr 45 min | Elevation: 2,240 m)

Puliampatti, en route to Ooty, offers expansive agricultural fields and fallow lands dotted with scrubby vegetation. This transitional landscape is excellent for observing open-country species, raptors, and migrants during the right season. After morning birding, we ascend the Nilgiri Hills to Ooty, a colonial-era hill station nestled within high-elevation montane grassland and shola forest. The evening in Ooty offers the first chance to observe high-altitude endemics of the Western Ghats.

Target Species: Painted Sandgrouse, Sykes's Lark, White-eyed Buzzard, Red-necked Falcon, Jungle Prinia, Barred Buttonquail, Nilgiri Laughingthrush, Nilgiri Sholakili.

Day 8: 12 December 2026 – Ooty – Doddabetta & Coonoor (Elevation: 2,600 m) – Doddabetta & Coonoor (Elevation: 2,600 m)

Doddabetta, the highest peak in the Nilgiris, rises over 2,600 metres and is blanketed in dense shola forest. These forests, found only in the higher Western Ghats, are ancient, fragmented cloud forests rich in endemic flora and fauna. Birding here is characterised by slow, quiet walks through moss-covered trails where one may encounter the shy Nilgiri Thrush or the striking Black-and-Orange Flycatcher. In the afternoon, we descend to Coonoor to bird in lower elevation sholas, broadleaf woodland, and coffee plantations.



Target Species: Nilgiri Thrush, Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Tytler's Leaf Warbler, Indian Blackbird, Malabar Whistling Thrush, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Malabar Parakeet.

Day 9: 13 December 2026 – Ooty – Masinagudi (54 km | 1.5 hr | Elevation: 950 m) – Masinagudi (54 km | 1.5 hr | Elevation: 950 m)

Descending into the rain-shadowed dry forests of Masinagudi, we enter the drier deciduous and scrub habitat of the Moyar Valley. These forests offer a rich contrast to the lush sholas of the previous days. The open canopy and bamboo thickets are ideal for raptors, woodpeckers, and dry-zone babblers. Riverbanks, clearings, and village groves enhance the birding diversity. Masinagudi is also productive for night birding, with owls and nightjars active shortly after dusk.

Target Species: White-bellied Minivet, Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, Malabar Lark, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Blue-faced Malkoha, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Jerdon's Leafbird.

Day 10: 14 December 2026 – Masinagudi – Munnar (271 km | 8.5 hr | Elevation: 1,500 m) – Munnar (271 km | 8.5 hr | Elevation: 1,500 m)

Today's long drive from Masinagudi to Munnar is a transition between two major ecological landscapes—from dry deciduous woodland into the cool, misty hillsides of the southern Western Ghats. Arriving in Munnar by evening, we step into a world of high-altitude montane grasslands and fragmented shola forests. These ancient ecosystems, among the most threatened in India, harbour some of the rarest highland bird species in the country. If time permits, we explore the outskirts for an introduction to its rich avifauna.

Target Species: Evening scouting for Nilgiri Flycatcher, Hill Swallow, Indian Blackbird, Indian Blue Robin.



Day 11: 15 December 2026 – Rajamala National Park & Pothamedu Hills, Munnar (Elevation: 1,500–2,300 m)

We begin early with birding at Rajamala (Eravikulam National Park), one of India's best-known protected highland reserves. Characterised by undulating montane grasslands and isolated shola forest patches, this park is a biodiversity hotspot for both flora and fauna. These habitats host rare endemics that have evolved in isolation at these elevations. In the afternoon, we shift to the more open hillsides of Pothamedu, a productive area for raptors, flycatchers, and hill-forest edge species.

Target Species: Nilgiri Pipit, Nilgiri Thrush, Palani Laughingthrush, White-bellied Sholakili, Broad-tailed Grassbird, Black-and-Orange Flycatcher, Painted Bush Quail.

Day 12: 16 December 2026 – Munnar – Periyar via Bodinayakanur (97 km | 3 hrs | Elevation: 900 m)

This morning we journey through the Bodinayakanur ghats on the way to Periyar. These rugged lower hills are often overlooked but provide ideal habitat for species like Yellow-throated Bulbul and Sirkeer Malkoha. The route offers open-canopy deciduous forests, scrub, and thorny thickets. Upon reaching Periyar, we explore the outer edges of the Tiger Reserve, home to a mix of dense evergreen forest and bamboo patches. Evening birding near the park's fringes is excellent for laughingthrushes and hornbills.

Target Species: Yellow-throated Bulbul, Hill Prinia, Sirkeer Malkoha, Wayanad Laughingthrush, Rufous Babbler, Malabar Barbet, White-bellied Treepie.

Day 13: 17 December 2026 – Periyar – Thattekkad (104 km | 3 hr 15 min | Elevation: 35 m)



After a final morning birding session in Periyar, we descend from the highlands to the lowland rainforests of Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary. This transition introduces us to a radically different avifaunal zone. Thattekkad is one of the richest birding sites in India and known for its dense canopy, water bodies, bamboo brakes, and mixed tropical forest. Evening and night birding around the sanctuary can be particularly productive, with chances for a variety of elusive nocturnal species.

Target Species: Malabar Gray Hornbill, White-bellied Blue Flycatcher, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Indian Pitta, Great Eared Nightjar, Sri Lanka Bay Owl, Indian Scops Owl, Jungle Owlet.

Day 14: 18 December 2026 – Thattekkad – Urulanthanni Forest (Elevation: 50–100 m)

Today is dedicated to deep-forest birding in Urulanthanni, a relatively undisturbed tract of evergreen and semi-evergreen lowland forest adjoining Thattekkad. This terrain is humid, mossy, and often dimly lit, making it a rewarding challenge for serious birders. The forest supports numerous Western Ghats endemics and an excellent diversity of insectivores and frugivores. The mix of riverine forest, hill slopes, and open glades offers opportunities to encounter both canopy and understorey dwellers.

Target Species: Malabar Trogon, Nilgiri Flowerpecker, White-bellied Woodpecker, Crested Goshawk, Crimson-backed Sunbird, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher.





Day 15: 19 December 2026 – Thattekkad & Cheekode Forest (Elevation: 35 m)

Our final full day of birding includes a morning visit to Cheekode Forest, a more open lowland woodland with bamboo stands and fruiting trees. This location supports a mix of endemic forest birds and generalist species. In the afternoon, we position ourselves in a well-situated forest bird hide, perfect for observing shy insectivores and flycatchers up close. As light fades, we enjoy one last look at the forest's evening chorus.

Target Species: White-bellied Treepie, Indian Pitta, Rusty-tailed Flycatcher, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Orange-headed Thrush, Blue-bearded Bee-eater.

Day 16: 20 December 2026 – Thattekkad – Cochin International Airport (45 km | 1 hr 30 min)

After a relaxed final morning birding walk to target any missed species, we transfer to Cochin International Airport for departure. The combination of island and mountain endemics, forest, grassland, and wetland habitats, and both diurnal and nocturnal species makes this a comprehensive and deeply rewarding birding journey through Southern India.

Target Species: Final checklist species depending on group interest and prior sightings.

Please note:

1. Domestic Flights

The domestic flights from Chennai to Port Blair and Port Blair to Coimbatore are not included in the tour price, as fares tend to fluctuate. These flights can be conveniently booked online, and we are happy to advise on the best options.

2. Indicative Itinerary

This is a suggested itinerary. We reserve the right to make adjustments at any time in order to ensure the best possible outcome for the tour experience.

3. **Weather Advisory**

The weather during this period is generally pleasant. However, higher altitude regions such as Ooty can be chilly at night, so we recommend packing accordingly.

Tour Inclusions

- Accommodation
- Meals
- Transport
- Professional Guide(s)
- Activities and Excursions
- Internal Flights (if applicable)
- Support and Coordination
- Filtered Drinking Water
- All Applicable Taxes and Service Charges

Tour Exclusions

- International Airfare
- Visa Fees and Travel Insurance
- Optional Activities and Extensions
- Personal Expenses
- Camera Fees (where applicable)
- Vaccinations and Medical Expenses
- Tips and Gratuities

Please refer to the relevant links provided at the bottom of our website for our full booking terms and conditions and tour policies.

If you require any further information about bookings, cancellations, or other details, please do not hesitate to contact us.