



## SKETCH TOUR ITINERARY

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WESTERN GHATS and ANDAMAN ISLANDS ext | JAN 2026 | John Sterling and group

	Destination	Accommodation	Activity
1	Mumbai	<a href="#">Marriott Fairfields</a>	Arrive in Mumbai Airport, meet with the local team and transfer to the hotel near the airport. Briefing, dinner/ lunch (depending on time of arrival) and rest.
2	Mumbai	<a href="#">Mariott Fairfields</a>	Full day birding in Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary (1.5 hrs from hotel) and surrounding habitats with packed breakfast and a simple field lunch. Join a local expert to find the forest owlet and Vigor’s sunbird among other species. Night back at the hotel near the airport.
3	Thattekad	<a href="#">Amritara Hornbill Camp or similar</a>	Checkout and transfer back to Mumbai Airport and fly to Kochi. Transfer by road 2 hours to Thattekad Bird Sanctuary. Afternoon birding and night birding
4, 5	Thattekad	<a href="#">Amritara Hornbill Camp or similar</a>	On these two days, there will be full days of birding and also night birding. Thattekad is the most important lowland birding hotspot of southern India. The Ceylon frogmouth, Ceylon bay owl, great eared nightjar, Jerdon’s nightjar, grey-headed bulbul, Malabar trogon, Oriental dwarf kingfishers and many other special birds of southern India can be found here. There are also options to photograph birds in multiple hides here that will be in the evenings. These hides are INR1500 per person per slot for 2 to 3 hrs. This can be opted for on the spot with the bird guide.

	Destination	Accommodation	Activity
6	Periyar	<a href="#">Greenwoods Periyar or similar</a>	After another morning of birding in Thattekad, we head out post breakfast towards Periyar Tiger Reserve (3hrs) in the mid slopes of the Western Ghats. In the afternoon, post lunch, we head into the park on a guided nature walk focussed on the endemic Wayanad laughing thrush, Legge's hawk eagle, Malabar imperial pigeon, Malabar flameback and if lucky, a glimpse of the elusive nilgiri marten as well. Optional guided night walk into the park is possible today (and the next day) for those keen on mammals like slender loris, Jerdon's palm civet, Malabar spiny dormouse, mouse deer etc.
7	Periyar	<a href="#">Greenwoods Periyar or similar</a>	In the morning we head out on a drive towards the upper reaches of Periyar (40 mins) towards a region known as Gavi, a mix of shola forests and grasslands, a fantastic place to search for lion-tailed macaques, gaur and asian elephants. We return for lunch back to the lodge. In the afternoon we return for another nature walk in the park in case we are missing any of the endemics from the previous walk. Night walk optional.
8	Munnar	<a href="#">Windermere Retreats or similar</a>	We head further up with Western Ghats (2 hrs), en-route crossing the leeward slopes looking for yellow-throated bulbuls, painted spurfowl, common woodshrike, brown headed barbet and few other dry scrub species. We reach Munnar for lunch followed by an evening walk on Dshadan road looking for many new species including the broad-tailed grassbird, shaheen falcon and orange minivets. In the evening this trail can be fantastic for Indian giant flying squirrels, Indian porcupines and many herps included large-scaled pit vipers and montane trinket snakes.
	Destination	Accommodation	Activity

9	Munnar	<a href="#">Windermere Retreats or similar</a>	In the morning we visit to Eravikulam National Park, a landscape of rocky slopes, grasslands and shola forests seeking highland endemics of the Palni Hills like Palni Chilappan, White-bellied Sholakili, Nilgiri Thrush, Nilgiri Pipit, Nilgiri Woodpigeon, painted bushquail, Nilgiri Flycatcher, Tytler's leaf warbler, Tickell's leaf warbler and black eagles. This is also one of the best places to see the Nilgiri Tahr, the only mountain goat of southern India. If we miss the Broad-tailed Grassbird here too, we can visit Lakshmi estates in the afternoon to get the bird there.
10	Pollachi	<a href="#">By the Riverside</a> or similar	After another morning of birding in Munnar, maybe another visit to Eravikulam NP for missing species, we head down the hill towards the Palghat gap and the foothill forests of Sethumadai. (3.5 hrs) En-route we stop at Chinnar WLS for a walk along a forest stream to look for spot-bellied eagle owls and the grizzled giant squirrel. The landscape on this drive transitions from wet evergreen shola and grassland to moist deciduous to dry deciduous to eventually rocky scrub habitats dotted with coconut groves. Evening at leisure.
11	Ooty	<a href="#">Accord Hyland</a> or similar	Optional half day visit (with packed breakfast) to Valparai for the lion-tailed macaques, nilgiri langurs and great hornbills (in case we missed them at Periyar). We drive post breakfast(or post lunch) to Ooty, in the heart of the Nilgiris (5 hrs), an isolated massif rising north of the Palghat gap, with its own endemics. This is also an area with a high concentration of leopard and sloth bears and even black leopards in the tea estates. We will constantly keep an eye out for them while birding as seeing one in these semi-wild environs is very special. Evening birding en-route ooty if time permits.

	Destination	Accommodation	Activity
12	Masinagudi, Nilgiris	<a href="#">Jungle Hut or similar</a>	Today we head out early towards Dhoddabetta peak to look for the Nilgiri endemics like Nilgiri sholakili, Nilgiri Laughingthrush and other species like wood pigeons, crested goshawk, nilgiri flycatcher and Indian blackbird. There are also some interesting spots to look for Nilgiri thrush if it had remained elusive in Munnar. Post lunch we head towards the Sigur plateau of Mudumalai (1 hr). This drier region is a great spot to look for Malabar lark, blue-faced malkoha, yellow-wattled lapwing, spot-bellied eagle owl, white-bellied minivet, savannah nightjar and maybe if lucky, even yellow-legged buttonquail and the Indian nuthatch. The property itself is a great place to watch wild elephants, wild boar, small indian civet, sloth bears and leopards as it is located close to the forest edge in the fringes of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.
13	Masinagudi, Nilgiris	<a href="#">Jungle Hut or similar</a>	Full day birding in Masinagudi by jeep and on foot to look for the birds and mammals of the 900m high Sigur plateau. We also visit the trash dump here to look for Tawny eagles, Indian spotted eagles, woolly necked storks and other raptors and scavengers that visit.
14	Wayanad	<a href="#">Ela Blooms</a>	After another morning of birding we head towards Wayanad (3 hrs) where we shift into a 4wd jeep to transfer to the property over bumpy roads. Post lunch we hike the forests above the property, currently the only place to look for the Banasura Laughingthrush.
15	Wayanad	<a href="#">Ela Blooms</a>	Morning and afternoon hiking in the forests around the property in search of the Banasura Laughingthrush and other birds and herps of the Western Ghats.

	Destination	Accommodation	Activity
16	Nagarhole NP	<a href="#">Kabini River Lodge or similar</a>	Today we head out post breakfast towards the lowland forests of Nagarhole (3 hrs) where we go on safaris to look for tigers, leopards, black leopards, dhole, gaur, elephants and other wildlife. This is also a great place to look for white-bellied woodpeckers, vernal hanging parrots, green imperial pigeons, Malabar pied hornbills and rufous woodpeckers among other species.
17, 18	Nagarhole NP	<a href="#">Kabini River Lodge or similar</a>	Morning and afternoon safaris in Nagarhole National Park.  Note - On these safaris, the camera fee of INR 1500 per camera per safari (lenses above 200 mm) is not included. There are no exclusive vehicles allotted here. We will be 7-8 pax to fill up a vehicle. Beyond that will be in a second vehicle and sharing the jeep with other guests.
19	Mysore	<a href="#">Metropole</a> or similar	After another morning safari, we head towards the heritage city of Mysore (2 hrs). Here in our two available sessions, we can slot in a heritage walk of the city, its historical buildings and old temple markets and also visit Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary (40 mins) for a session of birding by boat on the Cauvery River. Camera fee in Ranganathittu is not included (fee is similar to Kabini)
20	Bangalore		We transfer to Bangalore Airport today for the flight out. (Day room in Bangalore near the airport optional depending on flight times) End of Journey Please Note - The itinerary is being run in 2026 and we may have to add a night in Bangalore or skip Mysore entirely to make sure we catch the flight to the Andamans for people choosing to go for the extension.

**EXTENSION - ANDAMAN BIRDING FOR ENDEMICIS - We fly out of Bangalore to Port Blair for the same**

	Destination	Accommodation	Activity
20	Port Blair	<a href="#">TSG Emerald View</a> <a href="#">or Bay Leaf Inn</a> or <a href="#">similar</a>	Fly out to Port Blair, Andaman from Bangalore Airport and transfer to your hotel. Meet and greet with the bird guide. Evening birding.
21, 22, 23, 24	Port Blair	<a href="#">TSG Emerald View</a> <a href="#">or Bay Leaf Inn</a> or <a href="#">similar</a>	3 full days of birding in the Andamans focussed on all the 24 endemics. (Narcondam Island is not accessible and hence the Narcondam hornbill won't be possible)
25	Port Blair		Transfer to Airport and Fly out . End of Journey

### Trip Notes -

The birding in Wayanad for Wayanad Laughingthrush involves 2-3 hour hikes to get to the habitat.

Andaman Extension - We have added 5 nights in the Andamans against the usual 4 as the Andaman Crake and Andaman Wood Pigeon are harder to find and sometimes may take an entire day.

**PACE:** Moderate. Early starts are necessary on most days since birding in South India is almost always best early in the morning, and breakfast will be had in the field or there will be a break to come back to the property for breakfast. On a few days there will be some downtime either after lunch, or after arriving back to the lodge after the day's birding excursion, but on at least one or two days you may arrive back at the lodge after dark. A lot of the birding and wildlife viewing will include a combination of driving to the spots and short to medium length walks – most flat, some on minor inclines. Safaris in Nagarhole will be on dirt tracks with mild bumps and undulations. At least three lunches will be packed lunches, and at least four breakfast will likely be a packed breakfast. We stop at each destination at least for two nights to ensure the hassle of packing and unpacking isn't too much.

**PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:** Moderate. Most of the birding will be on flat trails or slightly inclined roads or wide tracks. You can expect to walk around 2-3 miles (3.2-4.8 km) per day on average. The altitude will vary from sea level to a maximum of 2650m asl elevation.

**CLIMATE:** Usually very pleasant (mostly 55°-86°F, 13°-30°C). The higher reaches of the Western Ghats can be towards the colder side during the early mornings. The safari at Nagarhole too can be nippy with the wind chill factor during the early morning hours. During the extension at Hampi, the mid-day temperatures can be quite warm (90°F, 32-33°C).

**ACCOMMODATION:** Very good to excellent, all have private, en-suite bathrooms, full-time hot water, and 24h electricity.

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** This is a birding tour, but casual photographers will have great opportunities to photograph birds too, especially in the Nilgiris and the hides at Thattekad. Mammal photography also should be fairly easy except for nocturnal life seen on dusk walks.

## Tour Price

Based on 6 participants - \$ 6,500/pax on twin sharing

Based on 8 participants - \$ 6,000/pax on twin sharing

Andaman Extension Supplement - \$ 1,800/pax on twin sharing with 1 way flight to Port Blair included

#### INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation for 19 nights on a twin/double basis.
- Meal plan starts with dinner on day 1 and ends with breakfast on Day 20.
- Accompanying local bird guides for the entire program
- All entry fees in sanctuaries, monuments, safari drives, birding walks and excursions as per the itinerary.
- All road transfers by air-conditioned SUV or Mini Coach depending on group size.
- Camera Fees Included except in Kabini and Ranganathittu
- Internal flights between Bombay and Kochi (one way)
- Taxes

#### EXCLUSIONS

- Any expenses of a personal nature like beverages, laundry, telephone, souvenirs.
- International flights, travel insurance and visa charges
- Bird Hide Hire costs in Thattekad (~\$20 per person per session (2 hrs))
- Gratuities to local staff
- meals/snacks and flights beyond what is mentioned in the itinerary.
- Costs because of situations and itinerary changes beyond our control.

Note : Park rates are subject to change depending on the day of booking and proximity to date of travel. No refunds on canceled permits or unused safaris.