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The

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A high-end monthly magazine

October 2021

INTERVIEW with Shri Purnesh Modi, Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Gujarat





Like a Fairytale

f we want great memories, we have to make them. And the best way to start making it is by embarking upon that revenge trip you planned for this year in the unforgettable 2020. With just 2 more months left to say goodbye to 2021, we don't want you to look back with a feeling of despair. So here we bring you a destination straight out of a fairytale – Faroe Islands.

Tucked between Iceland and Norway in the North Atlantic Ocean, Faroe Islands is renowned among music lovers for its festive scene. Yes, it hosts five live music festivals throughout the year. For adventure junkies, it is a paradise because of its steep cliffs, waterfalls, rocky coastlines and hiking trails. Not to mention, the alluring colors of nature!

What else? Every year birds from 29 countries take a flight to India. We can spot large incoming flocks during September-October, marking the beginning of migration. As we celebrate the World Migratory Birds' Day on 9th October, it is exciting to visit the destinations in India that host such delightful guests.

Read on!

October 2021



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Chilika Lake, Odisha

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Far Far Away

The

Society

An archipelago with a difference

- I- h

t is an archipelago of 18 rocky volcanic islands floating between Norway and Iceland. Hikers, bird watchers and tourists are magnetically drawn to its windswept wilderness, its rugged terrain and jagged ridge lines. The Faroe Islands are a self-governing archipelago, part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Road tunnels, ferries, causeways and bridges interconnect the islands.

The history of the islands goes back to the year 300 AD. According to the legend, however, the first known settlers were believed to be Irish monks in the sixth century.

The Faroe Islands is a short flight from mainland Europe. You can fly non-

stop from Copenhagen, Paris, Reykjavik and a few other places. The flying time is one to two hours. The Faroe Islands can also be reached by ferry from Iceland and Denmark. The ferry from Denmark takes about 36 hours.

Cannon Guns

eagulls Nesting on Cli

During World War II, when the Germans invaded Denmark and Norway, the British swung into action and in an operation, code named 'Operation Valentine', moved in swiftly to annex the strategically placed Faroe Islands. The move successfully thwarted the German annexation. Shortly after the war, the British withdrew from the island. Huge rusted cannon guns pointing in the direction of the vast ocean, can still be found in the hills of the island. The Faroe Islands have a rich birdlife owing to its remote isolation. Hikers and bird-watchers are drawn to the islands' mountains, valleys and grassy heartland; the steep coastal cliffs are home to millions of birds. Come summer and it is breeding time for the birds. A total of 305 bird species have been identified in the Faroe Islands.

Mykines in the westernmost island of the Faroe Islands is one of the three places marked as the Ramsar site. Ramsar is an international treaty, where governments undertake to protect areas that have a special significance for the birdlife and biological diversity. Marked footpath leads you to the lighthouse at Mykineshólmur. Enroute you would pass



through colonies of Puffins, thousands upon thousands standing next to the breeding holes all along the path.

The German planes, during the war, had often attacked the lighthouse. The lighthouse is located at the far end of a narrow strip of land jutting out into the sea, a couple of hundred meters above sea level. Standing at the lighthouse is like standing on the bow of a gigantic ship. You can almost get a 360-degree view of the surrounding sea. It is probably one of the most isolated places on the island. Nobody lived here after the lighthouse became fully automated.

Mykineshólmur is the only place in the Faroe Islands, where Sea Gannets

can be found. These giant birds have an incredible wingspan of two meters. Sea Gannets feed on fish. These giant birds can achieve a mind-boggling speed of 100 km/h, while diving into the sea in pursuit of fish. The momentum generated enables them to reach far greater depths than any other airborne birds. It is a spectacular sight to see them in action. The birds fly in packs. And when a school of fish is spotted, the ungainly bird that it was a few seconds earlier, is turned into a sleek, aerodynamically proportioned animal as it lunges unswervingly into the sea water. Several of them dive simultaneously. Rarely is the dive unsuccessful.

Puffins, Mykines Cliff

11 22 Company

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Torshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands, is its largest city. It has eighteenth-century churches, and museums. It is a small town, with brightly painted houses, that looks quite similar to those that you see in Holland. The brightly painted houses in red, brown, yellow bring gaiety to the place, which probably is the reason for their vivid colour. However, even though the wild countryside is predominantly green, white and black in color, the quiet peaceful landscape can still hold you spell bound.

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THE FAROE ISLANDS





THE FAROE ISLANDS

The population of Faroe Islands is about

have turf covering the entire roof. Roofs plates, a turf of grass was spread, giving an impression of a house straight from a Grimm's Fairy Tale book. Seen from afar,

Ocean, the winter season is not prohibitively cold, with temperatures rarely dipping below freezing point. It rains almost 300 days in a year. Whether the islands are covered with a blanket of snow in winter or during the summer months, when the land is covered in a periphery of green, wherever you are in

the archipelago, you can be certain of one fact: You will never be far away from a bewitching sights of sheer cliffs, rocky coastlines and waterfalls. As the locals say, even from the windows of the islands' only jail, it overlooks a fjord. The long narrow inlet with rocky cliff lines sculpted by time, offers a magnificent

view. So even if you have had a run in with the law, you will, without doubt, enjoy your period of incarceration! As you stand on one of the hills and look out into the sea, all you see is a serene stretch of water extending away, interrupted only by small blobs of land spread sporadically across the ocean.

A Food Dish in a Café

Dried Cod outside a House

Where and how do you have your food in Faroe Island? The inhabitants of the Faroe Island or Faroese have just a word for it - 'Heimablidni', which means "home hospitality," If you're looking for a traditional Faroese food, you are welcome to dine in the homes of Faroese families and partake some delicious home-cooked Faroese meal.

What is Faroese cuisine? As elsewhere in the world, the local cuisine is defined by its culture, the climate and the abundance of edible plants and animals present in the region. The two most abundant raw food items available to them are the birds and the sea creatures. They have evolved a unique

way of preserving the food, through the cold north Atlantic climate, in its raw form without the use of salt. Due to a unique combination of continual low temperatures and gusty winds and salt ions in the air, the Faroese have developed a salt-free method for preserving meat and fish. The process is called rarest - meaning fermented. It entails hanging meat and fish out in the open and then later drying it in the house. Fishes thus strung on strings can be seen across the islands. The common vegetables available are Turnips, beets, radishes, potatoes, carrots and Jerusalem artichokes.

Despite being in the North Atlantic



THE FAROE ISLANDS

You cannot help but feel that you are indeed at the far end of the earth. You look around you and find that you are the only one standing there. You are indeed in one of the most sparsely populated places in the Scandinavian region! That too is one of the many enchantments of the place.

Sabarimala An Obeisance to Self Control

abarimala, the hilltop temple in the Patanamthitta district of Kerala, is the foremost temple for pilgrimage in Kerala. It is dedicated to Lord Ayyappa. It is a pilgrimage to be undertaken at least once for people across the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. During the pilgrimage season, the people come here to pay their obeisance, not just from these states, but also among the Indian diaspora across the globe. There is no class or distinction here. Such is the power of the call from the Holy, coming from the deepest recess of the mountains of Kerala. Who was Lord Ayyappa? Why is he venerated?

The story goes back to about 1000 years. King Rajashekara, from the Pandaya dynasty, while on a hunting trip, in the dense jungles of Kerala, came upon a child abandoned on the banks of the Pamba River. The King, who was childless at that point of

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time, was tempted to take the child and adopt him. The child had a golden necklace around his neck with a small bell attached to it. A sage, who witnessed all this, blessed the king to adopt the infant child. The king decided to name him Manikantan, meaning a child with a bell.

The child grew up under the king's stewardship. In the meantime a biological son was born to the king and queen. But the birth of a son in no way diminished the king's affection towards Manikantan. Manikantan grew up to be a bright and intelligent child. His adopted father had decided that Manikantan would be the future regent of his kingdom. However, when the time came for a decision, one of the ministers was not in favour of Manikantan being the future king. Over a series of events, the king finally was forced to grant the title of regency to his biological son.



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There are some items that need to be carried during the entire trip to the Sabarimala. The pilgrim has to prepare a travel bundle or 'Irumudikettu' as it is called in Malayalam for the pilgrimage. It is prepared under the guidance of a priest of a temple at the commencement of the journey.

The travel pouch has two compartments, one in the front and the other in the back. The front portion of the pouch has pooja items for Lord Ayyappa and the back portion is for carrying the personal belongings of the devotee. One of the pooja items is a coconut from which the coconut water has been drained through one of the 'eyes' of the coconut and is then filled with ghee. The process of draining of the coconut water signifies surrendering worldly attachments from the mind. And filling it with ghee signifies yielding to spiritual aspirations. The other pooja items

The king begged for Manikantan's forgiveness. Manikantan was already blessed with divine powers. He decided to leave the kingdom forever. He asked the king to build a temple atop the Sabari hill in his memory so that the people will not forget him. He, however, laid down a strict religious code. The devotees who came to seek his blessing should observe a 41-day penance before embarking on the temple pilgrimage. Further, they had to abstain from all physical pleasures and lead a celibate life for the entire period.

So a temple was built in the dense

forests of the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats. The idol of the deity was installed in the temple on the day of Makar Sankranti. The adivasi community who lived here, was believed to be the initial patrons of the temple. They considered Lord Ayyappanas their ancestral God.

Thus, a pilgrimage to Sabarimala is all about strict abstinence, which is why lord Ayyappa is also known as the Hindu god of self-control. The day a pilgrim decides to undertake the journey, he is expected to lead a simple life of abstinence known as 'Vrutham', eschewing all worldly pleasures of tobacco, alcohol and adhere to a life of celibacy. Shaving, hair cutting and cutting nails are also proscribed.

'Vrutham' starts from the day when he adorns a simple necklace, which serves as a reminder for his austere life for the next 41 days. The priest of the temple who has completed 18 Sabarimala pilgrimages, gives the necklace to the pilgrim. The necklace is removed only upon the completion of the pilgrimage. There is a dress code too. The pilgrims ought to be dressed sedately in all black. include rose water, puffed rice, incense sticks, camphor, betel leaves, etc.

The bundle has to be balanced on the head of the pilgrim. Only those who carry the Irumudikettu would be allowed to climb the 18 sacred steps to enter the temple.

Pilgrim season is from November to mid-January. Mandala Pooja and Makaravilakku are the two main events of the pilgrimage season. Mandala Puja marks the end of the 41 long days of austerity and Makaravilakku is an annual festival held on Makara Sankranti in Kerala. The temple stays closed during the rest of the year except for the first five days of every Malayalam month and during the festival Vishu in April.

The temple is situated on a hilltop amidst the 18 hills and dense forests. The dense forest is a part of the Periyar Tiger Reserve. There are several routes to reach Sabarimala temple.

<image>

Pamba River

The traditional route is via Erumeli. It is also the toughest, requiring a trek of about 61 km through forest and hill tracks. It is believed to be the path taken by Lord Ayyappan, to subdue Mahishi, the demoness. About 4 km from Erumeli, is a place where Ayyappa is believed to have rested. It also marks the start of the ascent to Sabarimala. Today, most pilgrims commence the trek from the Pamba River. After their long journey, they cleanse themselves in the river - the river, where Lord Ayyappa was found. After the ablutions, the trek commences.

The place around the temple can accommodate several lakhs of people. The crowds of people swarming in, could be overwhelming. One moment,

next morning.

The temple structure that houses the deity is on an elevated platform, which can be reached after climbing 18 steps. Each of the 18 steps, which are about a meter in width, is associated with human emotions. It is believed that climbing up the steps, while chanting, helps the pilgrims to transcend the emotions that cause pain. The first five steps symbolize the five human senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. The next eight steps symbolize feelings such as: anger,

the place would have a few hundreds of pilgrims. In a few hours, the crowd would swell up to several lakhs. The experience could be quite bewildering. There are hotels and dorms available. Most pilgrims sleep over and leave the

love, greed, lust, jealousy, boastfulness, internecine competition, and pride. The next three steps signify inherent personality such as perspicuity, enjoyment and inactivity. The last two steps represent knowledge and its antithetical - ignorance.

A pilgrimage is never easy. It tests the forbearance, endurance and the tenacity of the faith of the pilgrim. The lifestyle of the pilgrim in those 41 days is similar to that of a monk, in terms of austerity and hardship. But the pilgrims are oblivious to all the discomforts, as he walks in a bedraggled state, oblivious to everything around him. With a staff in hand and the Irumudikettu balanced on his head, he walks with determination for his obeisance with the lord.



On World Migratory Birds' Day on 9th October, we look at a few exciting places to watch birds in India.



Harike Lake Punjab

ocated downstream of the confluence of the Beas and Satlaj, Harike is a shallow water reservoir with thirteen islands covered largely with floating vegetation. During the winter migration period, the lake supports over 2,00,000 migratory ducks and geese.

Drive from Amritsar to Harike through the village and past the Gurdvara. Yellow-eyed pigeons often roost on trees near the Gurdvara. Explore the acacia and shisham groves to look for the Sind sparrow, rufous-vented prinia, white-crowned tit, pipits and migratory warblers. The rare bristled grassbird is also found here. When crossing the dam at the confluence of the two rivers, you can expect to see gulls and terns. The trees near the dam teem with flycatchers, rose finches, Spanish sparrows, thrushes and treecreepers in winter. The lake itself is rich in water birds like ducks, geese and waders. Keep a watch overhead for eagles, falcons and other raptors. Birdwatchers can also hope to see Indian skimmer. Smoothcoated otters and rare turtles are other attractions.





Pong Dam Himachal Pradesh

aharana Pratap Sagar or Pong Dam Lake is the result of the highest earth fill dam in India built on the Beas River in the Kangra district. Built in 1975, the reservoir was declared as a bird sanctuary in 1983.

From Pathankot Railway Station, drive about 32km to the dam. Start by scanning the receding shore-line in winter, where wagtails, sand larks, pipits and plovers feed at the mudflats. Continue to explore the margins of the reservoir, where the shallow water holds wading birds. Stone curlew and pratincole feed on the sandy banks. Through binoculars or a scope, you can gaze at the open deep water to see dabbling ducks. Below the outfall of the dam, swamp habitats and water side vegetation are used by birds such as ducks, coot, warblers, babblers, munia, kingfishers and predators. More than 220 bird species of 54 families have been recorded in numbers exceeding 1,30,000.



INTERVIEW

66 The Government of Gujarat is committed to welcome the travellers from all over the country and the world to Gujarat. 99

In a candid conversation with Praveg's Tourism One, Shri Purnesh Modi, Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Gujarat throws light on the elements that make Gujarat an ideal tourist destination. He shares with us his insightful views about the attractions of Gujarat and the post-pandemic tourism scenario.

Excerpts from the interview:

1. What are your views on the potential of Gujarat's tourism?

Geographically rich and diverse, the State of Guiarat has immense potential, considering its assorted tourism facets.

Places like Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad, Statue of Unity in Kevadia and Shyamji Krishna Varma Memorial, Mandvi are not just tourist destinations, but they are a great source of inspiration with its stirring stories about India's freedom fight and its prominent heroes.

Gujarat is a paradise for nature lovers with its bountiful and wholesome natural elements like sea, desert, hills and forest. While the



Shri Paras Patel, Managing Director of Praveg Communications India Limited with Shri Purnesh Modi during his congratulatory visit

State is a home to scenic and Blue Flag beach Shivrajpur along with Mandvi, Dumas and Madhavpur

beaches, the White Rann in Kutch is a geographical wonder. Saputara, Girnar and Pavagadh are renowned

Shri Purnesh Modi.

Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Gujarat

for their scenic hills. Moreover, the prosperous nature attracts a wide variety of flora and fauna, a treat for the wildlife lovers.

Heritage tourism is a significant aspect of tourism in Gujarat. The State has many palaces, tombs, stepwells and forts to testify the glorious past. The city of Ahmedabad, India's first World Heritage City, is a treasure trove of monuments. Vadngar and Surat are the destinations to relish the timeless heritage sites. Modhera Sun Temple, Adalai Stepwell and Rani-ki-Vav. Patan are the architectural wonders of the State.

Gujarat is a land of Lord Krishna. Lord Shiva and many spiritual saints. The holy places of Dwarka, Dakor, Somnath and Ambaji hold special importance when it comes to religious tourism. Shabri Dham, Anjani Kund,

Unai in Dang district are popular for their unparalleled cultural roots. Not to mention, Gujarat is known as a hub of tribes as we can find numerous tribes with their unique lifestyle, traditions and cultures and art & crafts that bring in many tourists from across India. The geography of Gujarat, favorable climate and natural setting

make it an ideal adventure destination. Dang, Tapi, Narmada, Dahod, Godhra, Panchmahal, Gir and Saurashtra are some of the names that offer the best of thrilling activities to the tourists.

Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has brought



2. What is your message for the tourists, who are planning to visit Gujarat, with regard to Covid-19?

responsible tourism in focus once again.

Travellers are now becoming more mindful of their choices, reevaluating their itineraries, keeping sustainability and preservation of resources in mind.

With the situation returning back to normal, Gujarat is ready to welcome tourists with all the precautionary measures in place. In this situation, it is imperative for the tourists to follow the Covid-19 guidelines set by the Gujarat Government, and contribute their bit in bringing about positive change.

With the announcement of celebration of festivals like Navratri in a restrictive manner, we all should ensure to continue with all Covid restrictions in public places as responsible citizens.



Sultanpur Jheel Haryana

Que in ite

aryana's only national park, Sultanpur is just 15 km from the bustling centre of Gurugram (Gurgaon). As you enter the park, you can hope to see common hoopoe, paddy field pipit, purple sunbird, little cormorant, pigeons, Eurasian thick-knee, gray francolin, black francolin, Indian roller, white-throated kingfisher, six species of pipits and three or four species of lark. Yellow-wattled lapwing and Indian courser are also possible. Spot billed duck, painted stork, white ibis, black headed ibis, little egret, great egret and cattle egret are seen throughout the year. About 240 species of birds have been seen at the sanctuary, including many migrants that can be seen in winter. Explore the wetlands, where you can see pelicans, flamingoes, geese, ducks and other birds in good numbers during the winter months. Trees like acacia nilotica, acacia tortilis, berberis and neem attract good birdlife.



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WATCH THE MIGRATORY BIRDS





urce: anijoshiphotography/Shutt

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Keoladeo Ghana National Park

hough it is a national park, most people know it as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary - one of the richest bird areas of the world supporting more than 350 bird species and India's top attraction for birdwatchers. The wetland sanctuary was created 250 years ago, around a Keoladeo Shiva temple by the Ajan Bund constructed by Maharaja Suraj Mal of Bharatpur in the 1700s at the confluence of two rivers, the Gambhir and Banganga. This park is a UNESCO listed World Heritage Site. The mix of habitats like marshes, lakes, acacia groves, scrublands, dry grasslands and mature woodlands in a relatively small area makes this national park outstanding for bird watching. It is not uncommon to see a hundred thousand birds in winter. The cycle rickshaw drivers know the likely sites for many of the sought after birds. In years of good rainfall you can also enjoy a boat trip among the birds. Deer, antelopes, jackals, mongoose, jungle cat and other mammals are often seen during the visit, and there are chances of spotting fishing cats and porcupines. The Indian rock python is regularly seen.



Chambal Sanctuary

he Chambal river, near the tri-point of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, is one of the most important bird areas in India. It is the breeding site of the Indian skimmer and is a gathering place for migratory birds like common teal, Northern pintail, bar-headed goose.

Travel from Agra to Bah, and a little further ahead is the floating jetty for a boat safari on the Chambal River. Board a motorboat and enjoy views of the spectacular ravines and riverside sand beaches. As you go along the river, you can see flocks of ducks like common teal, Northern pintail, Brahminy shelduck and red-crested pochard, and often also bar-headed geese. Scan the shores and small islands, where you may spot wading birds like crakes and sandpipers. The skimmer is strikingly coloured with a fiery orange-red bill, red legs and black head contrasting with the predominant white of the rest of its body, it has an unusual bill with the lower beak mandible being longer than the upper one. As it flies over the river, its bill skimming the surface, the lower mandible causes a furrow over the water and feels for fish, frogs and other prey to grab for its food. Black-necked stork, common crane, sarus crane and black-bellied tern are other birds you can hope to see.

Besides birds, you can see mugger crocodile and the endangered gharial native to sandy river banks in the plains of north India, several species of turtles, and this is a likely site for the endangered Gangetic dolphin.





10

A Group of Indian Skimmers

Sambhar Salt Lake

Flamingo Birds

he Sambhar Salt Lake, India's largest inland salt lake, is best known for its flocks of flamingos. This large, shallow saline lake, only about 3 m at its deepest, is 22.5 km long, while the width ranges from 3.2 km to 11.2 km. The lake bed is almost flat. Every year, from November to March, about 2,00,000 migratory birds arrive at this lake. Greater and lesser flamingos have been a regular visitor for several decades. More than 45 species of ducks, geese and other waterfowl can be seen here in winter. The dry areas around the lake are also good for birdlife.









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WATCH THE MIGRATORY BIRDS

Jawai Bandh

awai Dam was built by Maharaja Umaid Singh of Jodhpur - the work started on 12 May 1946 and it got completed in 1957. This historical dam is a paradise for birdwatchers during the winter months. Bar-headed geese can be seen in large flocks as also many species of ducks. Along the shallow edges of the lake, you can watch spoonbills, ibis, herons and many small wading birds. Saras cranes abound in the fields around the reservoir. Marsh crocodiles are abundant. The hills around the lake are among the top sites for leopard spotting. Sloth bears, gazelle and other mammals are also present.

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Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary

Sarovar is one of India's best bird sanctuaries. Elliptical in shape, the lake has many access points. The highlight of the lake is its 360 islands, where many birds can be seen among the reeds, aquatic vegetation and grasses. As you approach the lake from Ahmedabad, you could see saras cranes in the fields. Scan the edge of the lake to watch wading birds. A boat ride on the lake is a wonderful experience. The boatmen pole the slim boats through the aquatic vegetation of the shallow lake. You can watch spoonbills and ibises feeding in the shallows. The lake passes rafts of ducks and coots. Flamingos abound. As you come to more open areas of the lake, you can see pelicans.





Chilika Lake

he Chilika Lake, covering 1100 sq km, is the largest coastal lagoon of India, with an extensive unspoiled stretch of empty beach across the sand bar, which separates the lake from the sea. The best months to visit the lake are January and February when the lake becomes the wintering grounds for large flocks of migratory birds. Take the boat ride from one of the jetties to the Sea Mouth, the place where the sand bar is located. Carry a pair of binoculars to watch the birdlife – rafts of ducks, flocks of flamingos, majestic sea eagles, and the congregations of waders along the islands that dot the lake. You may get to glimpse the Irrawady dolphins surfacing for air. Disembark at the Sea Mouth to explore the sandy beach, which has a breathtaking view of the Bay of Bengal.

Ranganathittu

Rembankment across the Kaveri river was built between 1645 and 1648 by the Maharaja of Mysore. The sanctuary has been protected since 1940 from the time of Salim Ali's visit when he brought the rich birdlife to the attention of the Mysore royal family. Part of the sanctuary is an eco-sensitive zone, meaning that certain commercial activities cannot take place without the Government's permission.

The sanctuary is a magical place. Going on a boat ride around islets, you can get remarkably close views of painted stork, Asian openbill stork, common spoonbill, woolly-necked stork, black-headed ibis, lesser whistling duck, Indian shag, storkbilled kingfisher, egret, cormorant, Oriental darter, spotbilled pelican and heron that breed here. You can also get good views of crocodiles, bats and small mammals.

Croc



Vedanthagal

he Vedanthangal - Karikili bird sanctuaries are located about 85 km southwest of Chennai, and are perhaps India's oldest sanctuary having been protected from 1798. In December-January, you can see 30000 birds nesting in the sanctuary.

PRAVEC'S TO





Pulicat Lake

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A Pater

ulicat is a large brackish water lagoon, open to the sea. Between November and March, this is the place to watch a huge number of birds. Thousands of flamingos could be seen in winter, and also a good number of pelicans.

Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary

bout an hour by road from Nashik, the Nandur Madhmeshwar Sanctuary was created by a weir constructed in 1907-1913 at the confluence of the Godavari and Kadva Rivers with islands, shallow marshes and aquatic vegetation that comprise ideal habitats for many wetland birds. The sanctuary records list about 250 species of birds, many of them migratory birds that arrive from Siberia, the Himalaya and West Asia in the cooler months. The reservoir fills with water during the monsoon, which can be a good time to get close views of spoonbill, black winged stilt, cormorants, godwits, stints, sandpipers, pratincole and flocks of indigenous ducks. From September to March, the assemblage of 20,000 or more migratory birds includes demoiselle cranes, white stork and flocks of ducks from as far as Siberia. The huge concentration of water birds has earned this sanctuary the title of 'Bharatpur of Maharashtra'. The sanctuary is also a good place to look for imperial eagles, marsh harriers and other predatory birds. Viewing towers offer a good opportunity to watch and photograph the birdlife. While walking around the wetlands, you could spot fishing cat, mongoose or jackal stalking prey at the waterfront.

Besides this wetland, the grasslands of Ozar and Wani are also notified as Important Bird Areas by Birdlife International because about 200 species have been seen in this region. Among the regular visitors are two highly endangered Indian endemics – the great Indian bustard and the lesser florican – that have been known to breed in these grasslands. Gangapur Dam is another draw for birdwatchers.



Dibru-Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary

+

he flood plains of the Brahmaputra hold many interesting birds. One of the best places to see these specialties is Dibru Saikhowa. Cross by ferry to the marshy tracts where birdlife is abundant.







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