RED PANDA

DOBATE AND HANGETHAM, SOUTH-EASTERN NEPAL

R
esembling a racoon and growing to about the
size of a fox, the red panda is characterised by
its small features, thick reddish-brown coat,
white snout, inner ears and cheeks, and big bushy
ringed tail that it uses for balance in the trees and
warmth in the winter. Like its namesake, the giant
panda (taxonomists can’t agree if the two are
related), with whom it shares part of its range and its
love of bamboo, red pandas are very rarely seen in
the wild. In fact, now that wild giant pandas are
being seen regularly in China’s Qinling Mountains,
wild red pandas are actually considered harder to
track down, even though their natural habitat is
much bigger, stretching across the remaining foothill
forests of the Himalayas and across to the Qinling
Mountains in the east.

Throughout this huge area the best chance of
seeing one is in a tiny part of south-eastern Nepal,
where scientists are researching the pandas, in
association with the Red Panda Network (RPN). To
get there it is necessary to fly to Kathmandu and
onward to Bhadrapur, before travelling by jeep into
the damp forests. Once here it is then necessary to
hike the steep trails between the Sherpa hamlets of
Dobate and Hangetham, visiting known feeding
areas and roosting sites with expert forestry trackers.

Even though red pandas usually move around the
forests alone at night in search of the best bamboo
leaves and shoots, as well as fruits, nuts, eggs,
flowers, and seeds, they have small territories of one
to two square miles, and, given a few days, there is a
fair chance of a small group of visitors seeing one.

COST: ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
SAMPLE PACKAGE TOUR: Red Panda
Network offer 15-day tours to see red
pandas in the wild, costing US$2,999
(£1,882), which includes guides, food and
accommodation. Flights from the UK to
Nepal and internal flights are not
included. Other wildlife on the itinerary
includes bears, rare clouded leopards,
wolves, and threatened bird species.
www.redpandanetwork.org

GETTING THERE: From Nepal’s capital
city Kathmandu it’s a 45-minute internal
flight to Bhadrapur. From Bhadrapur it is
about eight hours by road and track to
Dobate, where there is a small guesthouse.
Beyond there it is necessary to camp.

VISA REQUIREMENTS FROM THE UK:
Visas are required for travel to Nepal. To
apply, contact the Nepalese Embassy at
www.nepembassy.org.uk

TIPS & WARNINGS: Trekking in the
mountains requires a reasonable level of
fitness. You will need hot, wet and cold-
weather clothing and need to be
prepared to camp out at night when the
temperature drops.

WHEN TO GO: Nepal’s monsoon season
usually lasts from June to September so
the best time to look for red pandas is
from October to May.

Top: the red panda grows to the size of a domestic cat. Above: eastern Nepal where the shy red panda leads a solitary existence in high-altitude forests, foraging on bamboo and fruit

TOUR OPERATORS:

- RED PANDA NETWORK, Tel: 001 877 584 6056; www.redpandanetwork.org
- ROYLE SAFARIS, Tel: 0845 226 6259; www.royle-safaris.co.uk
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Embrace your wild side

Welcome to this special sample edition of Wild Travel, a new magazine dedicated to helping you discover the world’s most amazing wildlife and wildlife encounters. Whether you’ve always wanted to see lions on Kenya’s Masai Mara, gorillas in the Congo or basking sharks off the Isle of Man then you’ve come to the right place. Over the coming pages there is a small selection of the content you’ll find in every issue, which includes wildlife news, trip reports, destination guides, photography workshops, field guides to individual species and the lowdown on the latest conservation projects. Throughout the magazine you’ll find recommendations from some of the most respected writers and tour operators in the business – all of whom can testify that you don’t need to be an adrenaline-fuelled adventurer or a member of a wildlife documentary crew to enjoy many of nature’s greatest spectacles.

If you like what you see you can order a copy of the launch issue of the magazine and save £1 off the usual cover price at www.subscriptionsave.co.uk/wild. See you at the check in desk!

Matt Havercroft, Editor