

TRACKS SAFARIS

WE GET YOU CLOSER



15 NIGHT JUNGLES OF EAST AND CENTRAL INDIA

Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, Gibbon Sanctuary, Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, Kanha Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve





This itinerary has been designed to showcase the highlights of wilderness experiences in Eastern as well as Central India. Through this journey we showcase different landscapes and thus different wildlife species. The parks envisaged in this itinerary are the Kaziranga National Park, Hoollongapar Wildlife Sanctuary, Sundarbans National Park, Pench Tiger Reserve and Kanha Tiger Reserve. The Sundarbans as well as Kaziranga National Parks are UNESCO world heritage sites. They are home to a wonderful diversity of wildlife.

On this journey you explore mangrove forests in Sundarbans, tropical evergreen forests in Hoollongapar, grasslands and Brahmaputra flood plains in Kaziranga and tropical deciduous forests in central India. These forests are home to a huge diversity of wildlife.

Key wildlife to seek out when in these parks are as follows:

Mammals: Bengal tiger, leopard, fishing cat, leopard cat, jungle cat, Asiatic elephant, one-horned rhinoceros, wild water buffalo, gaur, dhole, hoolock gibbon, capped langur, smooth coat otters, soft ground as well as hard ground swamp deer, hog deer, a variety of different macaques and the slow loris to name a few.

Birds: Pallas fish eagle, grey headed fish eagle, pied harrier, marsh harrier, lesser adjutant stork, Asian openbill stork, black necked stork, oriental pied hornbill, great Indian hornbill, brown fish owl, dusky eagle owl, great white pelicans, ruddy shelducks, mallards, bar headed geese, northern Shoveller, purple sunbird, green-tailed sunbird, fire-tailed sunbird, collared kingfisher, black capped kingfisher, brown winged kingfisher

Reptiles: Saltwater crocodiles, water monitor lizards, a variety of sea turtles and snake species such as king cobra, Russell's viper, Python, keelbacks and vine snake to name a few.



DAY ONE

On arrival into Delhi International Airport Tracks Safaris representative will receive you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel (check-in time is 1400 hrs). Time at leisure to rest from the long flight. After lunch, our tour expert shall meet you in your hotel and give you an overview of Delhi. This is followed by a city tour. **Overnight stay will be at The Claridges, New Delhi on a full board basis**

DAY TWO

Early this morning transfer to the airport to board the first flight for Kolkata. Our team will receive you at the airport. We recommend that you have your breakfast at a hotel near the airport before you embark on your journey to the Sundarbans. If you choose to take a traveling naturalist to accompany you through the trip, he/she shall meet you at the hotel for breakfast and continue traveling with you for the remainder of the journey. It is highly recommended that a traveling naturalist accompanies you as not only are they knowledgeable in the field while on a safari, they will also be great people to travel with on the long journeys from one park to the other ready to answer any questions that may arise with regards to culture, agriculture, politics or more. The journey to Sundarbans is completed in two parts:

Part 1: Drive from Kolkata airport to Gothkhali Jetty, a drive of 3hrs. **Part 2:** At the jetty you take a boat journey of 2hrs to get to Sundarbans Tiger Camp. You should arrive at the camp in time for a late lunch. After lunch you can rest from the long journey or maybe explore the ground of the camp with the naturalists learn about the flora and fauna of Sundarbans.

Overnight will be at Sundarbans Tiger Camp on a full board basis

DAYS THREE AND FOUR

Sundarbans is vast and spread out and accessing the further points is not possible if you focus on short safaris, thus we have planned two full day private safaris. The picturesque landscape and the variety of birds that inhabit Sundarbans National Park are the ideal settings for photographers to capture the raw, natural

beauty of the park. It is advisable to carry a bean-bag or stabiliser as the boats move due to the tidal change. Twice a day the whole forest sinks due to diurnal tide. Low tide and high tide determine what time one can venture to certain parts of the park. Spend the two days exploring these unique mangrove forests of the largest River Delta in the world. Returning to the camp in the evening for dinner.

Overnight will be at Sundarbans Tiger Camp on a full board basis



DAY FIVE

This morning you make your way back to Kolkata in the similar way that you travelled to the Sundarbans – first half of the journey by boat and the remainder by road. Rest of the day is at leisure.

NOTE: Depending on the tides and should there be enough time we can do another short boat safari this morning before departing for Kolkata.

Overnight will be at Hotel near the airport on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis

DAY SIX

This morning after an early breakfast you transfer to the airport to catch your flight to Jorhat in Assam arriving by lunchtime. Jorhat is part of the Assamese tea growing region and our home for tonight will be the Thengal Mansion – a heritage hotel constructed in 1929. It was also the site of the event of launching of 'Dainik Batori' the first daily newspaper in the Assamese language.

This is your access point to a very unique wildlife sanctuary in India, visited by only a few – the Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary. Formerly known as the Gibbon Sanctuary it is an isolated protected area of evergreen forest. The sanctuary was officially constituted and renamed in 1997. Set aside initially in 1881, its forests used to extend to the foothills of the Patkai mountain range. Since then, the forest has been fragmented and surrounded by tea gardens and small villages. In the early 1900s artificial regeneration was used to develop a well-stocked forest resulting in the site's rich biodiversity.

The Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary contains India's only gibbons – the hoolock gibbons, and North-eastern India's only nocturnal primate – the Bengal slow loris.

Most of the vegetation within Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary is evergreen in character and is composed of several canopy layers. It is home to 7 species of primates – hoolock gibbon, capped langur, stump-tailed macaque, northern pig-tailed macaque, eastern Assamese macaque, rhesus macaque and the Bengal slow loris. It is also found in the park are the tiger, leopard, Asiatic elephants, jungle cats, wild boars and 3 species of civets.



The isolation of the park by numerous tea gardens creates a geographic barrier for migrating animals. The growing populations of tea garden workers also threatens the habitat since many people rely on the forest for firewood, traditional medicine and food. Large quantities of leaves and grass are collected from the forests to feed cattle. During the rainy season, herbicides and pesticides from the tea gardens wash through the sanctuary.

After having lunch and settling-in you will take a short visit to the park. The park is to be explore on foot. An armed forest guard accompanies you during your exploration. Please note larger mammals are rarely seen in the park, our aim here is to explore the primate variety in the park. The biggest danger and the reason for the armed guard accompanying you are the passing herds of elephants going to or coming from Nagaland.

Overnight will be at the Thengal Manor on a full board basis

DAY SEVEN

Early this morning we go in to explore the Gibbon Sanctuary. Morning is a better time to explore - please note you will often find these primates in high canopies and might have to go off the path to get a better look. In doing so we need to be aware that these evergreen forests are also home to leeches. These are much smaller than the ones that you find in evergreen forests of Borneo, but after you visit a thorough check is advisable.

You shall return to the Manor for a late breakfast, following which you will check-out and make your way to Kaziranga National Park. The journey to Kaziranga will take you about 2.5hrs by road. Your home at Kaziranga will be Diphlu River Lodge, located at the edge of a river creek that divided the buffer from the core area of the park. The creek often attracts a lot of wildlife and thus the bar and dining area of the lodge overlooks this creek from where one can spend time birding or might even find the one horned rhinoceros.

Diphlu is perhaps the best lodge in the park's vicinity and in April 2016 Diphlu River Lodge was honoured to have had the opportunity to host the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, HRH Prince William and Catherine Middleton, on their state visit to India.

This afternoon take your first jeep safari into Kaziranga National Park.
Overnight will be at Diphlu River Lodge

DAYS EIGHT AND NINE

We have planned two safaris for each of these days in different zone for you to explore the park in its entirety.



Kaziranga National Park situated in Assam is a UNESCO world heritage site recognized as the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain. The fluctuations of the Brahmaputra River result in spectacular examples of riverine and fluvial processes in this vast area of wet alluvial tall grassland interspersed with numerous broad shallow pools fringed with reeds and patches of deciduous to semi-evergreen woodlands. Kaziranga is regarded as one of the finest wildlife refuges in the world. The park's contribution in saving the Indian one-horned rhinoceros from the brink of extinction at the turn of the 20th century to harbouring the single largest population of this species is a spectacular conservation achievement.

It was inscribed for being the world's major stronghold of the Indian one-horned rhino, having the single largest population of this species, currently estimated at over 2,000 animals. Along with the one-horned rhinoceros it is also home to other globally threatened species such as the Bengal tiger, Asiatic elephant, wild water buffalo, eastern swamp deer, hog deer, capped langur, hoolock gibbon and the sloth bear.

Along with the mammalian species the park is also home to numerous avian species and the count of the same will be close to 300 species

The park today has 3 zones which the guests can explore – Baguri, Kohora and Agaratoli (range offices as marked on the map). Whereas most lodges are located close to Kohora gate, Diphlu River Lodge is located close to Baguri zone.

Overnight will be at Diphlu River Lodge on a full board basis

DAY TEN

Early this morning checkout and transfer to Jorhat airport by road. The journey to Jorhat will take about 2.5 hours and on arrival at the airport you will check in for your flight to Raipur. Please note there is no direct flight and you will need to stop over at Kolkata.



Our representative will meet you at the airport and accompany you to your hotel in Raipur. Remainder of the evening is at leisure.

Overnight will be at Courtyard by Marriott on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis

DAY ELEVEN

After an early breakfast this morning, transfer by road to Kanha Tiger Reserve. Your journey to Kanha should take about 4.5hrs by road. Arrive at your lodge by lunchtime. Check-in enjoy your lunch and take a short rest. Later this afternoon you begin exploring Kanha Tiger Reserve.

Kanha is one of the larger tiger reserves and one of the older reserve forests in India. The area was declared as reserve forest in 1879 and upgraded as the Banjar Valley Reserve in 1933. The region was ruled by the Rajput dynasties from sixth to twelfth century and then ruled by the Gond Kings till the British took over in 1818. Kanha had been the dwelling place of the nomadic 'baigas' – who practiced shifting cultivation (dhya) till 1868 – when the Land Settlement Act prohibited it. In 1973 the park became one of the first (of nine) 'Tiger Reserves'. Now the park encompasses 1949 sq. kilometres of pristine forests.

Some of the grasslands that exist today in the park were locations where the Baiga tribes practiced shift cultivation. Today they house the variety of deer species. The most unique of these is the hard ground Barasingha. This species thrives on a very specific type of grass and when this was replaced their

population dipped drastically and reached the brink of extinction. The species was then bred in an enclosure in one part of Kanha zone. Since then the population has bounced back and forest department is now trying to relocate and build an alternate population in Satpura Tiger Reserve.



The government allows tourists to explore the park twice a day – once in the morning for about 3.5hrs and once in the afternoon for a similar amount of time. Of course the entry exit times change as do seasons since they are based on sunrise and sunset times.

Begin exploring Kanha this afternoon.

Overnight will be at Singinawa Jungle Lodge

DAYS TWELVE AND THIRTEEN

Continue exploring Kanha on these two days. We have planned 2 safaris on each day.

The reserve is today divided into 4 major zones – Mukki (close to which Singinawa is located), Kisli, Kanha and Sarhi. Ideally we would like to showcase Kanha and Kisli zones as well as Mukki however safaris in India are on a first come first serve basis and availability of the same needs to be checked.

Overnight will be at Singinawa Jungle Lodge on a full board basis

DAY FOURTEEN

This morning after breakfast make your way to Pench Tiger Reserve. The journey to Pench should take about 3.5 hours and you should arrive into Pench well in time for lunch. This afternoon begin exploring Pench Tiger Reserve.

Pench Tiger Reserve derives its name from the Pench river which is the lifeline of the forest. Unlike Tadoba which was covered in Bamboo, Pench is a more open landscape. The predominant tree here is teak. The teak tree has very large sized leaf which helps it absorb a lot of sunlight and generates a lot of food for the tree to grow quickly, however, the same leaf and its large surface area causes a lot of evaporation thus the tree drops its leaf quicker than the other trees. This causes a large part of the forest to lose its cover and the forest dries out quicker than other parks. However, this also means that you have better visibility here than in other jungles.



Pench also boasts of one of the highest numbers of prey base for the predators in any of the central Indian jungles. So, there is always something there to see and the park houses a good number of predators ranging from jackals, wild dogs, wolves to leopards and tigers.

Overnight will be at Pench Tree Lodge on a full board basis

DAY FIFTEEN

We have planned two more safaris today to explore Pench Tiger Reserve. India is also home to another interesting animal called “Gaur” – often referred to as the Indian Bison. It is the tallest wild cattle species in the world with height ranging from 4ft 8in to 7ft 3in at shoulder.

Overnight will be at Pench Tree Lodge on a full board basis



DAY SIXTEEN

This morning take your last safari into Pench Tiger Reserve. We hope by now you would have seen and photographed many wonderful species and after an early lunch transfer by road to Nagpur airport. The drive to the airport takes about 3 hours. On arrival you will be met and assisted to check in for your flight to Delhi and onward connection to your international flight home.



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