

# TRACKS SAFARIS

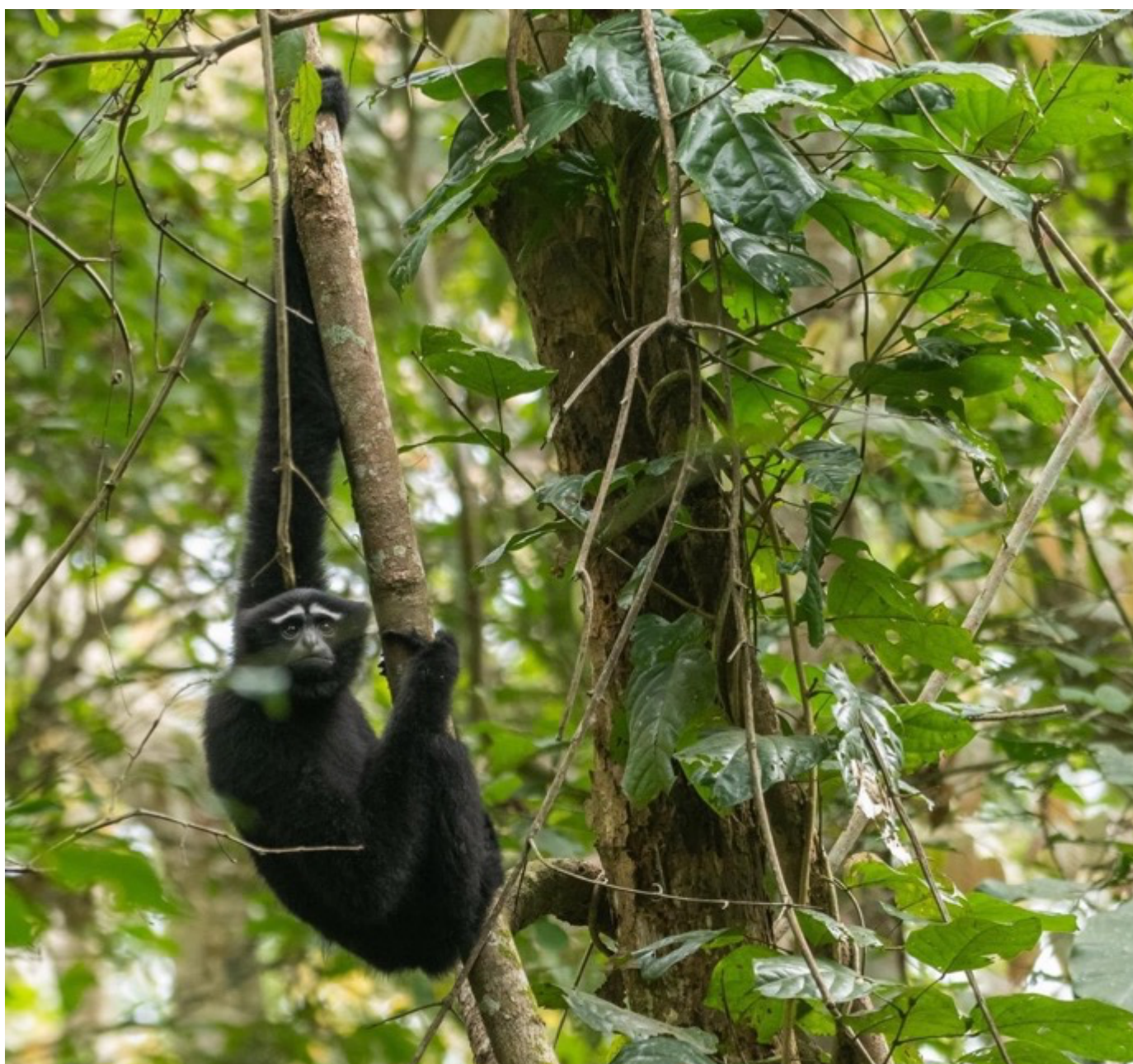
## WE GET YOU CLOSER



**15 NIGHT WILDLIFE OF EASTERN INDIA**

**TIGERS OF THE SUNDERBANS, ASIATIC RHINOS AND RED PANDAS**

**Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, Gibbon Sanctuary and Singalila National Park**





The eastern states of India though a little difficult to access and not as well organised as central India, are home to an amazing diversity of wildlife. In this itinerary we will be taking you from the high reaches of the Himalayas to the world's largest delta and mangrove forests. We will visit tropical evergreen forests as well as flood plains of the mighty Brahmaputra. In this adventure we will explore the natural heritage of Assam as well as West Bengal.

The parks envisaged in this itinerary are the Sundarbans National Park, Kaziranga National Park, Hoollongapar Wildlife Sanctuary and Singalila National Park. Both the Sundarbans as well as Kaziranga National Parks are UNESCO world heritage sites. They are home to a wonderful diversity of wildlife.

In our adventure we shall be searching for the following species:

**Mammals:** Bengal tiger, leopard, fishing cat, leopard cat, jungle cat, Asiatic elephant, one-horned rhinoceros, wild water buffalo, hoolock gibbon, capped langur, smooth coat otters, red panda, yellow throated marten, swamp deer, hog deer 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 our representative will receive you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel (check-in time is 1400hrs). 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 which will be followed by a city tour.

**Overnight stay will be at The Claridges, New Delhi on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis**

### **DAY TWO**

Early this morning transfer to the airport to board the first flight for Kolkata and on arrival 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, then your naturalist will meet you at the hotel for breakfast and continue travelling with you for the remainder of the journey. It is highly recommended that a travelling naturalist accompanies you as not only are they knowledgeable in the field while on a safari, but 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 Sundarban 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 beanbag 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.

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

#### **DAY FIVE**

This morning, you will transfer back to Kolkata in the same way that you arrived in the Sundarbans – the first half of the journey will be by boat, and the remainder by road. Depending on the tides and should there be enough time we can do another short boat safari this morning before departing for Kolkata. You will have lunch on the boat before continuing the drive to the city. The rest of the day is leisurely.

**Overnight will be at Hyatt Regency, Kolkata on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis**

#### **DAY SIX**

After an early breakfast you will transfer to the airport to catch a flight to Jorhat, in Assam, arriving by lunchtime. Jorhat is part of the Assamese tea growing region.

Our home tonight will be the Kaziranga Golf Resort, a charming boutique retreat set amidst the lush tea gardens of Jorhat. Designed in colonial style, the resort offers a blend of heritage elegance and modern comfort. Set on a 150-acre tea estate. It is built around a 9-hole golf course and serves as a perfect base to relax before exploring the wilds of Kaziranga.



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 explored 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 Kaziranga Golf Resort 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 golf resort 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. 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 on a full board basis**

## **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

After the morning safari you will check out and transfer to Guwahati by road. The journey to Guwahati will take about 4 hours and the remainder of the day is at leisure.

**Overnight will be in Vivanta Guwahati on a full board basis**

#### DAY ELEVEN

Early this morning transfer to the airport and catch a flight to Bagdogra. Our team will receive you at the airport.

Upon arrival, drive approximately 45 minutes to Kakarbhitta, where you will complete the immigration formalities to enter Nepal. Please ensure you have a valid multiple-entry visa for both India and Nepal.

After completing immigration, continue your journey to the Red Panda Outpost. This drive can take up to 5 hours, with the final stretch (1 to 1.5 hours) traversing unpaved roads. You will travel in comfortable 4x4 Boleros and are expected to reach the homestay by early evening.

The evening is for leisure. Guests will receive a brief orientation, following which they can enjoy a sumptuous dinner and overnight at the property.

Note: It is recommended that you get visas for both countries. Although there is no checking on the Nepal side.

**Overnight will be at Red Panda Outpost on a full board basis**



#### **DAYS TWELVE, THIRTEEN & FOURTEEN**

These next three days are dedicated to exploring the pristine forests of the Singalila landscape a unique ecological corridor that spans both India and Nepal in search of the elusive Red Panda and other fascinating Himalayan wildlife.

Each day starts early. The expert team of local trackers heads out before dawn to scan the surrounding forests for fresh signs of Red Pandas. Guests have the option to either join this early morning ritual or begin the day at a more relaxed pace.

By 07:30 to 08:00, the tracking team typically returns with updates. If a Red Panda has been spotted, guests are guided to the location by a naturalist and field guide. Depending on the terrain, you may reach the site via 4x4 Bolero or on foot through beautiful, dense Himalayan forests. Sightings are treated with the utmost respect guests are allowed to observe and photograph the Red Panda for 15 to 30 minutes, with minimal disturbance to the animal and its habitat.

If no panda is sighted early in the day, the outing still offers memorable hikes through the forest, with opportunities for birdwatching, discovering animal tracks, and learning about the high-altitude ecosystem. The pace is gentle, and your naturalist will tailor the route based on your interests and fitness.



Guests may enjoy a picnic-style breakfast or lunch in the forest or return to the Red Panda Outpost for a warm, homely meal depending on the day's flow and conditions.

Afternoons, especially post-lunch, tend to be misty and serene, making it an ideal time to Unwind with a book, enjoy birdwatching around the lodge or Nap or reflect on the day's adventures.



Note: In the past there have been guests who have disturbed the Pandas and so now a time limit has been set. Of course, if you are being respectful, you can spend more time with the Pandas.

Evenings are relaxed and cozy. Guests gather around the fireplace, sharing stories over a warm drink. On select nights, short documentaries or presentations on Red Pandas and the local ecology may be shown.

Enjoy a hearty dinner prepared with locally sourced ingredients before settling into the comfort of your room for the night.

**Overnight at Red Panda Outpost on a full board basis.**

#### **DAY FIFTEEN**

Having explored the region around the Red Panda Outpost, this day is dedicated to further exploration on foot. Guests can opt for a half-day or full-day hike, tailored to their comfort and interest level. The outpost team will advise on suitable routes based on your preference. For shorter hikes, light snacks will be carried along. For full-day treks, a packed lunch will be provided. Upon return, a vehicle will be available at the roadhead to drive guests back to the lodge.

This region, with its higher altitude, offers the chance to spot a different set of Himalayan birds. Notable species include Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch, Bar-throated Minla, Blood Pheasant, Alpine Thrush, Fulvous Parrotbill, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Satyr Tragopan.

Enjoy your final evening at the outpost reminiscing about the journey over dinner and the warmth of the fire.

**Overnight at Red Panda Outpost on a full board basis.**

## **DAY SIXTEEN**

This morning after breakfast you will transfer back to Bagdogra. Once you are at Bagdogra airport you will be assisted to check in for your flight to Delhi and connect with your international flight home.



**TRACKS SAFARIS – WE GET YOU CLOSER TO INDIA!**

