

Nature Tourism in Manas National Park - Assam

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The Manas Reserve, located in the foothills of the Bhutan hills, far from human habitation, is a world in itself. The Mans River flowing through the Park demarcates the border between India and Bhutan. The Park has vast deciduous forests where the dense cover often cuts out the light. Its wet grasslands are the home of the rhino, water buffalo, elephant and tiger. Manas is noted for its population of the rare golden langur-found only in this part of the country. They are often spotted in the tall trees. Manas Tiger Reserve provides shelter to a variety of wildlife, including 55 mammalian species, 36 reptilian species and 3 amphibian species, thus making it the greatest protected area in India in terms of number. The tiger population at Manas Reserve is approximately 80 in number. Apart from the ones named above, capped langurs, hoolock gibbons, Assamese macaques, slow lorises, leopards, panthers, golden cat, fishing cat, marbled cat, binthurongs, sloth bears, wild dogs, Ganges dolphins, hog deer, Indian muntjacs, water buffaloes, gaurs (Indian bison), giant squirrels, hispid hare, otters, Indian pangolins, and some 2,000 elephants are also found here.

The rare and attractive red panda has been spotted occasionally in the higher elevated portions of the forest. Over 450 species of birds have been recorded, including the Bengal Florida, great Pied hornbill, wreathed hornbill and few unique species of waterfowls. Reptiles include different species of snakes and the monitor lizards. The Assam roofed turtle was spotted at the Reserve as recently as 1989. Manas forest is possibly as diverse as a natural biosphere can be. Its vegetation ranges from tropical semi-evergreen forests in the northern parts to tropical moist and dry deciduous in the western region of the park, which comprises a variety of different grasses and shrubbery. There is

also a considerable variety of aquatic flora along the Manas River. One can hire a jeep to go around the park.

The Assam State Tiger Reserve Manas Tourist Department conducts tours, including boat trips and elephant rides. These trips are both convenient and cost effective. Manas is located along the Indo-Bhutan border with contiguous wildlife habitats in Bhutan. Mans Sanctuary was established in 1928. Prior to that the Raja of Gauripur and the Cooch-Bihar royal family used Manas as their hunting grounds and this area was declared a National Park in 1990. The Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is the only tiger project in Assam. This wildlife sanctuary is Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Barpeta District, about 176 kms from Guwahati in the foothills of Bhutan. The Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the India's most magnificent national park and a well known World heritage site. It is situated on the banks of the river Manas at the foothills of the Himalayas. It covers an area of 519.77 square kms. Its surroundings are even lovelier than those of the larger Kaziranga. Set in the thick jungle along the Bhutan border, the Manas wildlife sanctuary is home to a wide variety of wildlife. This Tiger Reserve is one of the dense, wildest and least visited wildlife sanctuaries. It is also famous for its unique biodiversity. It has been justly called the loveliest wilderness in the country. Over half of the area is covered with tall grass and scattered patches of woodland with simul, khoir, udal, sida, bohera and kanchan trees.

While Kaziranga is known for the Rhinoceros, Manas National Park is famous for the Majestic Tigers. This park is the only project Tiger in Assam. The Manas Reserve, located in the foothills of the Bhutan hills, far from human habitation, is a world in itself. The Manas River flowing through the Park demarcates the border between India and Bhutan. The park has vast deciduous forests where the dense cover often cuts out the light. Its wet grasslands are the home of the rhino, water buffalo, elephant and tiger. Manas is noted for its population of the rare golden Langur-found only in this part of the country. They are often spotted in the tall trees. Other primates in the Park include the capped Langur, Assamese macaque, the slow Loris and the hillock gibbon. These are rarely seen but the whooping call of the hillock gibbon can be heard resounding through the forest. The Reserve is also home to the attractive red panda but these are only seen occasionally in the higher elevations.

Manas have a very special biosphere, for it harbors twenty species of birds and animals that are highly endangered and listed in the IUCN Red Data Book. These include the hispid hare and the pigmy hog. The lush forest canopy at Mans national park shelters colourful birds – the giant thornbills, both pied and gray varieties, pheasants, jungle fowl and scarlet minivet being among them. The water – Birds along the reveres include brahmyny ducks, mergansers and a range of egrets, herons and pelican Over 2840 sq.kms. in area, Manas is, a fascinating tiger reserve. The area of Manas has roughly 45% grassland and 55% trees land as wildlife habitat. The river course may have about 100 sq.km. of riparian forests of grass and primary succession of tree cover, which is probably the most suitable water buffalo habitat any where and providing by far the best habitat for the tiger, where the concentration of the species is the highest. Inter specific relation of the prey and predator in this area is extremely interesting and awaits scientific study to understand population dynamics and other evolutionary processes at work. In this area the ever changing river course causes erosion and accretion at the same time providing extraordinary dynamism to the habitat / ecosystems sustaining very high productivity,

The beautiful Mans National Park is a World Heritage Site. It lies 80 km west of Guwahati off the NH – 31 on the border with Bhutan. Reopened in 2001, the park was closed for many years because insurgency. It is worth a visit for its varied natural beauty with water buffalo grazing on expansive stretches of sand and Sal trees forests flanking the Manas River. The park is also home to 400 species of birds. Capped and golden Langur, and tourists may have to pay a little extra if they are carrying cameras. Nameri National Park is located 35 kms, north of Tezpur and only reachable by taxi. The 200-square – kilometre park flanks the River Bharali and is a lovely, quiet place for fishing, rafting, bird-watching or guided walks in safe areas of the park. There are over 300 species of birds here, including the rare white-winged wood duck, as well as fish eagles and hornbills. You may also bison-are rarely sighted. Guides can be arranged at the park entrance, while fishing and walking can be arranged via the Eco camp. The best season to visit the park is from November to March.

Kaziranga National Park is a World Heritage Site covering an area of 430 square kilometers on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. The magnificent park lies 217 km east of Guwahati and occupies the vast valley floor against a backdrop of the Karbi

Anglong hills. Its rivulets, shallow lakes and the semi-evergreen forested highlands blend into marshes and flood plains covered with tall elephant grass. A visit here, especially in the early morning, is an exhilarating experience and visitors will likely see elephants, deer, wild buffalo and the park's famous one-horned rhino – numbering around Thousand Five Hundred. Though its estimated 80 tigers are very elusive, driving through the park's landscape of open savannah grassland interspersed with dense Jungle is a wonderful experience. The abundant birdlife includes egrets, herons, storks, fish eagles, kingfishers and a grey pelican colony. The rhinoceros is best seen from the back of an elephant. They see oblivious to camera – clicking tourists, although like the unpredictable wild buffalo, they are equipped with lethal horns and are potentially ferocious. Jeeps will take you deeper into the forest than elephants but they cannot get nearly as close to the rhinos. Kaziranga Park is open from November to early April. During the monsoon (June – September), the Brahmaputra bursts its banks, flooding the low – lying grasslands and causing animals to move to higher ground within the park.

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