

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## ASSAM & NAGALAND

### FESTIVALS, TRIBES AND TEA GARDENS

#### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

- Tribes of Nagaland
- Naga Hornbill Festival
- Majuli, the world's largest river island
- The Kaziranga Nature Reserve
- Jeep and elephant safaris
- Great Indian One Horned Rhino
- Tea plantations of Assam
- Tranquil heritage tea bungalows
- Visits to monks and monasteries
- Toupheema, Rengma tribal village
- Diverse birdlife
- Vibrant local markets

#### GENERAL SUMMARY

We are excited to announce a new and improved itinerary for our photographic tour of some remote and little-known areas of North East India. Join us for this epic adventure that takes us to both Assam and the tribal villages of Nagaland. Assam is better known than its neighbouring Indian states through its reputation as one of the country's major tea-growing areas. In Assam our journey starts with a visit to the Kaziranga National Park, famous for its conservation of the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros. From here we explore the tea gardens that Assam is famous for. We taste the lifestyle of a Colonial tea planter both at Wild Mahseer and Banyan Grove. In both locations we stay in gorgeous heritage bungalow accommodation.

Majuli the world's second largest river island is a further highlight where we visit monks and interact with the friendly local people renowned for their boat skills on the mighty Brahmaputra. Moving on to Nagaland we explore this little known tribal state bordering Myanmar. It comprises sixteen regions and numerous ethnically different hill tribes. We will have opportunities to visit some of the villages and tribes. We will also spend two nights in Toupheema Village, home to the Rengma tribe. We conclude our Nagaland adventure with two days at the annual Hornbill Festival where many of the remote tribes come together for an extravaganza of colourful celebrations. Be prepared to be totally blown away by this adventurous



journey. Return home with a superb portfolio of travel images together with a whole bunch of vibrant memories.

## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrive in Calcutta

Transfer to group hotel. We will meet as a group in the evening for introductions, a trip briefing and dinner.

### Day 2: Kolkata – Jorhat – Kaziranga

After breakfast we will take the morning flight to Jorhat in Assam. From there we will journey for three hours to the famous Kaziranga National Park. We will be accommodated in stylish, stilted bamboo houses that are equipped with all modern conveniences. Our delightful location is adjacent to the river where local people fish. The local people also cultivate fields of bright yellow mustard. The park itself is remarkable for the work done on conserving the one-horned Indian rhinoceros. Nowadays, this survivor

from prehistoric times is found sporadically in pockets of the northeastern state of Assam and in Nepal. In Assam, their habitat is limited to just two national parks, Kaziranga and Manas on the Bhutan border. We will lunch en route stopping to photograph. Late afternoon we arrive and settle in. In the evening we may enjoy some cultural entertainment and a BBQ.

Accommodation: Diphlu River Lodge

### Day 3: Kaziranga National Park

We begin with a sunrise elephant safari through the park. Since the wildlife is relatively unconcerned by the presence of elephants, we will be able to see more wildlife at a closer range than when we travel by jeep. We return to the lodge for breakfast and a chance to visit the local village and its friendly inhabitants. After lunch we take a jeep safari into the western massif. The park is a paradise for bird watchers, with a variety of migratory and resident birds. There are a number of water bodies inside the park that are home to pelicans, storks and darters. Apart from the rhino, other species found are hog deer, swamp deer, wild buffalo and elephants. If you are very, very lucky, you



may spot a tiger! The sunset over the lake in the massif is particularly lovely.

Accommodation: Diphlu River Lodge

### Day 4 & 5: Balipara and Wild Mahseer

Following sunrise and a relaxing breakfast we leave for Wild Mahseer in Sonitpur located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River. Wild Mahseer is a step back in time to colonial days. Our tranquil accommodation is in the middle of the Addabarie Tea Estate, established by the British Assam Tea Company in 1864. The photographic opportunities here are diverse and will include women in colourful saris harvesting the tea shoots with deft fingers into large baskets. Herds of Elephants are common in this area and the local people have a healthy respect for them. The Saturday market is famous. The hospitality of our hosts at Wild Mahseer is superb.

Accommodation: Wild Mahseer Bungalows





### **Days 6 & 7: Majuli Island**

Today our destination is Majuli, the largest inhabited river island in the world. After lunch we arrive at a small ferry point on the Brahmaputra. It may take two ferry trips over arms of the river before we land on the island itself. It is never known in advance where the ferries will be as the river is continually changing. We time our journey to coincide with the late afternoon and sunset hours. The river is alive with fishermen, and the blood red Indian sun drops dramatically behind riverbank trees, giving fine photographic opportunities. Our accommodation for the next two nights will be simple bamboo huts on stilts, fashioned in the same style that the indigenous Mishing people use. The local people will cook and look after us very well. Both nights we will have a bonfire. We stay here for two

nights. Vibrantly green and fertile, Majuli is gradually being reclaimed by the mighty Brahmaputra River. Meanwhile, it has been shortlisted for future UNESCO World Heritage status. The sun rises beautifully over the misty river. You will find that the local village people are as interested in us as we in them. Majuli Island's drumming monks practice a monotheistic form of Hinduism called Vaishnavism, focusing on Krishna. It was created in the 16th century by social reformer and saint, Sankaradeva. The gentle and caring communities in these satras reflect his teachings and emphasise tolerance between castes and religions. We will attend one of their world-famous performances at the monastery and have free access to photograph and interact with the monks in their living quarters. Accommodation: Mishing Resort Huts

### **Days 8 & 9: Jorhat**

After breakfast an hour's drive takes us to the ferry point for a crossing of the main Brahmaputra River to Jorhat. This time we will travel on a larger ferry packed with local people. Life on and around the ferry terminals is fascinating to observe and photograph. Back on the mainland we make our way to our second tea garden in the heart of Gatoonga Tea Estate, Jorhat. Banyan Grove is a world of leafy hills, misty mornings and the ambrosial aroma of tea everywhere. A delightfully peaceful place to visit and to relax. The hundred-year-old rooms and decor give a vintage experience. Surrounding us are beautiful well-maintained tea gardens, ideal for photographic excursions. In the garden taking pride of place there is a hundred year



old Banyan tree; quite a sight to behold.

Accommodation: Banyan Grove Tea Bungalow

#### **Days 10 & 11: Tuophema, Nagaland**

Our ultimate destination today is the scenic village inhabited by the Rengma tribe, who are considered to be the best Naga blacksmiths. They are also noted for their energetic dances and melodious folk songs. 'Naga' is a vaguely defined umbrella term for several tribes of hospitable and warm tribal people. They are a race of the Mongoloid stock that speaks various Tibeto-Burman languages. Even today they maintain a diverse tribal culture that is celebrated in their festivals. The remnants of their early animist culture and ancient traditions are still very evident. Head-taking and human sacrifice are amongst the customs that have brought the most attention and notoriety to the Naga people! Their lands are located in the corner of India's northeast and border Myanmar. Nagaland, probably one of the least-known-about and little-visited areas of India, is an exciting prospect for photographers. In Tuophema we stay in simple but very

traditionally built village houses, constructed in the style that the locals themselves use. Each one is a little different, and all of them sit nicely on top of a hill that affords fine vistas. The local village is rich with photographic opportunities, and its inhabitants are especially friendly. A museum of traditional Naga artifacts, sponsored by the Calcutta Arts Council, is located nearby. In the evenings the local women will sing around a fire and demonstrate their traditional crafts such as weaving.

Accommodation: Rengma Village House Resort

#### **Days 12 & 13: Kohima and the Hornbill Festival**

In the morning after breakfast we will leave for the attractive hill town of Kohima and the Hornbill Festival. After checking in to our modern hotel, we will pay our first visit



to the Hornbill Festival. For two days we will visit the Kisama village, photographing and enjoying the Hornbill Festival. This is an annual cultural event that is celebrated by all the tribal people in the state of Nagaland. It is named after the Hornbill, a globally respected bird that shows up in the folklore of most of the state's tribes. This festival sustains, revives and protects the richness of the Naga culture and heritage. It is a giant colour-splashed hodgepodge of dances, folk songs, parades, games, sports, ethnic food fairs and religious ceremonies. We will be in the centre of it, mingling with the tribal people and photographing all that is happening. In the late afternoon and early evening we visit the local markets that teem with interesting food items such as hornets and frogs! The town is home to the famous 'Battle of the tennis court' war memorial. This commemorates the historical Second World War battle when the Allies and Nagas fought side by side to overcome and turn back the invading Japanese forces.

Accommodation: Hotel



### Day 14: Transfer to Kolkata flight

After breakfast we transfer to Dimapur Airport where for the flight to Kolkata. Hotel accommodation is not included on Day 14. If you would like us to book you a hotel for this night please let us know at the time of booking.

#### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All meals
- 12 nights' accommodation on tour
- 1 night hotel Kolkata
- Comfortable transport
- Photographic tuition
- Naga guide/coordinator
- Various location guides
- All entrance fees
- Camera fees, except for any video equipment
- 1 Jeep and one elephant safari
- Airport Transfers
- Two internal flights

#### WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Travel/medical Insurance
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, snacks between meals
- Tips for local staff
- Indian Visa

#### JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS

We will meet Day 1 at our first night hotel in Calcutta. Participants generally arrive at different times of the day or night, as they will book their own flights, opting for the best deals available. The first-night hotel will be available for check-in at midday on Day 1. If participants arrive



several hours before this, they may prefer us to book them in for an extra night in order to get some valuable rest. We will meet as a group at 19:00 in the hotel reception.

#### ACCOMMODATION

Our accommodation is an eclectic mix comprising two authentic and tranquil tea plantation accommodations, stilted bamboo huts, a town hotel and a comfortable stylish Jungle Lodge. We have chosen accommodation to allow us access to some exciting locations. Our accommodation choices are always the best that we can source in a particular place.

#### FOOD

Western and continental-type food is often available and the standard of local cuisine will be high. We will always take care to eat in establishments that have good hygiene. Bottled water is readily available.

#### SPENDING MONEY

This always depends on personal habits. Prices in India tend to be cheaper than the West, although some things such as bottled beers can be similar. £200 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses, including approximately £50 tips for local staff. This amount will allow money for soft drinks and/or beer. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, there are cash machines in the towns. Bulky items can often be shipped by the seller for a small additional cost.

#### GUIDANCE ON TIPPING

Tipping is an accepted and expected part of Indian culture, although you should only tip for services that are

well done. The total amount that you can expect to pay in tips for your local guide and drivers, as well as hotel staff, railway porters, etc. is around £50. We will offer advice on tipping.

### TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is recommended that you take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatri-



ation, loss of baggage and holiday cancellation. We will need a copy of your travel insurance at the time of booking.

### VACCINATIONS

You should attend your own doctor and dentist for a check-up. Your doctor will have access to the most up to date information on the required vaccinations for India. A

very good online resource is the [Scottish National Health Travelers' website](#)

### PASSPORT AND VISAS

A passport (with at least six months remaining validity) and a current Indian visa are required for this trip. Please note that you are required to have a passport with a machine-readable bar code. You will need to apply for your Indian visa in advance from the relevant issuing authority in your home country.

### HEALTH

We will have a first aid kit to hand at all times. Please bring your own small personal first aid kit, along with any medication for your own use. Hand wash that can be applied without water is always useful for getting rid of germs and removing greasy traces from fingers that will be taking photographs! Nowadays, it is relatively easy to stay healthy and well in India.

### CLIMATE

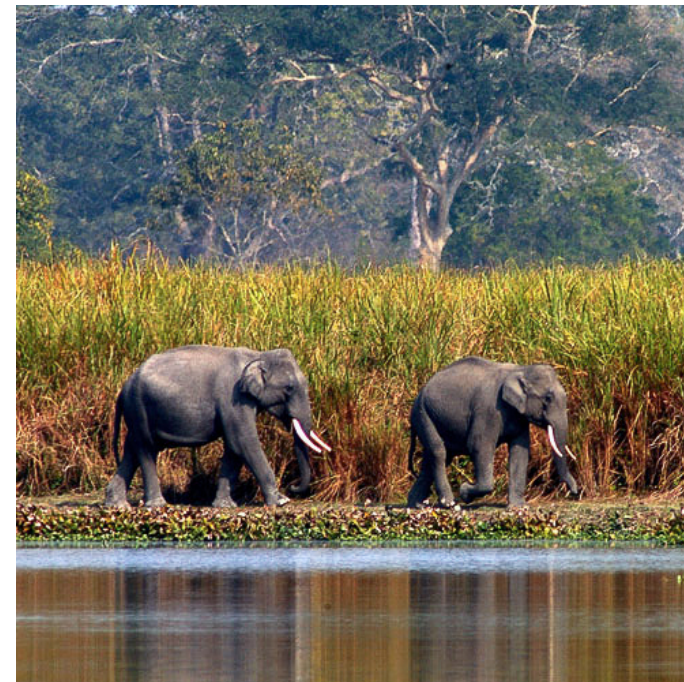
**Assam:** in the dry season, normally November to April, Assam often experiences clear sunny days with brilliantly blue cloudless skies. If overcast, it can get chilly, the temperature always drops at night. Normally, the temperature will be around 25°C with a nighttime minimum of around 10°C. It's a good idea to bring a light jacket and sweater to wear at the early morning locations.

**Nagaland:** the cold season begins in December and continues till the end of February. In winter the night temperature can come down to 4°C. Cold winds can blow during winter from the north-east, but mainly during February

and March. Warm winter clothes should be worn there in the late afternoon and evenings.

### CURRENCY

Indian Rupee. Money can be exchanged either at the airport, or through cash machines and money exchangers on the street. Bring dollars, pounds, Euros and/or debit/credit card.



### LANGUAGE

The main language of North India is Hindi. It is spoken and understood in the areas that we visit. English is often spoken and understood. However, all of the areas we visit have distinct languages that are different from Hindi.

**Nagaland:** all the major Naga tribes have their own language. In actual practice, the language varies from village to village. In all, there are about thirty languages. The



multiplicity of Naga languages is mainly because of the living conditions in the past. Villages were isolated and there was little of friendly inter-communication between them. It is interesting to find that some Naga tribes have borrowed Sanskrit words in their Assamese form. Hindi is understood too.

**Assam:** Assamese is the official language of Assam, spoken by over 13 million native speakers. It is spoken in



parts of Arunachal Pradesh and other North East Indian states. Nagamese, an Assamese-based Creole language is widely used in Nagaland and parts of Assam. Small pockets of Assamese speakers can be found in Bhutan and Bangladesh.

### CLOTHING

Generally speaking, light cotton clothing, allowing freedom of movement, will be well suited to the temperatures in Assam. In Nagaland we will be just on the edge of the cold season. It will be good idea to have a warm jumper, windproof jacket, a light waterproof jacket, a hat, light gloves and a pair of walking trainers or similar. Layering of clothes gives best versatility. Although the temperatures will occasionally be suitable for shorts, mostly these will not be appropriate for women to wear in certain areas. Good quality cotton clothing is available in the local shops and bazaars. A sun hat, sunscreen and a cotton/silk scarf to protect from the sun are essential in Assam.

### SUN PROTECTION

We expect some sun so please ensure that you have some sort of sun protection. You will need sun lotion with an SPF of 30 plus, along with sunglasses with good quality lenses and a high degree of UV protection. Cotton/silk scarves and a sun hat will protect from the sun.

### DAILY ROUTINE

You will need to have an adventurous approach in both mind and body. We will mostly be walking in towns and villages along well-defined trails. We will often photograph when and where opportunities arise. This requires a certain degree of spontaneity from participants. Our journeys will always be punctuated with someone shouting, 'stop' when a photo opportunity presents itself. There will also be opportunities for some early morning expeditions to make the best of the dawn light, conditions and locations. The sun sets early and dramatically around 16:20, so

evenings will be relaxed and focused on socialising, dinner and an opportunity to view the day's images.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION

- Camera bag or backpack such as the Flipside or Trekker series designed by LowePro.
- Any extra equipment that doesn't fit in your camera bag/hand luggage will need to go in a hard case that can be



put in the aircraft hold.

- A camera with interchangeable lenses such as a digital SLR or a compact system camera/mirrorless camera.
- A set of lenses to cover the whole range from wide-angle to telephoto, for example...

For full-frame cameras: 16–35mm wide-angle, 24–105mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom. For crop format cameras: 10–20mm wide-angle,

17–50mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.

- Spare camera (highly recommended)
- Sturdy tripod – not only useful for low light photography but also for accurate framing and composition of landscape and close-up images.
- Cable release – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures.
- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these. At least one neutral density filter in the range of 4–6 stops would be a good addition to your kit.
- Lens cloth
- Sensor cleaning device (optional)
- Lightweight ‘trekking’ absorbent towel for drying cameras and equipment
- Rain cover for camera and camera bag.
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- A laptop with the image editing applications of your choice, essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor. Most of the places we stay in have Wi-Fi.
- Backup storage device (optional)
- Spare batteries and chargers
- All electrical sockets are compatible with European two-pin plugs, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

### NEED MORE INFORMATION?

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions about the holiday. If you have any more questions, please get in touch. Talking on the phone (we will



always call you back) can often be a quick way of sorting out individual questions, and it helps us to get to know each other before the holiday.

### BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Contact us [through our website](#), where you can also fill in the [online booking form](#), or phone +44 (0)1270 440222.

### PARTNERS

Non-photographer partners will be very welcome, although this primarily a photography holiday. We also visit some very beautiful and relaxing places. If any participants do not wish to join the walks/photographic sessions, they will be able to relax in and around the accommodation. The cost will be the same for photographers and non-photographers.

### OUTDOOR TRAVEL

This is an outdoor travel photography holiday and the itinerary will be dependent on the vagaries of the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use its discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this. Your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

### LINKS

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website. Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)

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