

NAGALAND & HORNBILL FESTIVAL

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| TOUR DETAILS | | Duration |
|---|-----------------------------|----------|
| HIGHLIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elephant-back safari searching for unicorn rhino • Majuli Island, the largest river island in the world • Encounter the Nagas, Asia's last head-hunting tribe | | 13 days |
| Off The Beaten Track Rating ●●●●● | Activity Rating ★★ ★ | |

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrive into Guwahati (from Delhi or Kolkata as required) airport where you will be met by a Travel The Unknown representative. Drive to Kaziranga. Overnight in comfortable lodge in Kaziranga. Meals: n/a.

DAY 2 Early wake up with hot cup of chai and biscuits. Jeep will take you to the Central Sector at 5am for your elephant safari. As the sun rises, ride on elephant-back and wade through thick elephant grass looking out for the endangered unicorn rhino. Witness a host of other wildlife, including barking deer and tigers (if you are lucky! Kaziranga is home to the largest concentration of tigers in a protected area). Return to the jungle lodge for a hearty breakfast. Relax, amble around the surroundings. After lunch, leave for the afternoon jeep safari in the national park. Return and overnight in Kaziranga. Meal plan: B,L,D

*Kaziranga National Park is home to two-thirds of the world's population of **Indian one-horned rhinoceros** at just under 2000. A few centuries ago, the Indian one-horned rhino ranged across the north Indian plains in the wetlands of the rivers Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra. Today it is found only in pockets of Assam and in Nepal. Kaziranga also boasts a range of other wildlife and harbours about 15 species of India's threatened mammals including the **densest population of Royal Bengal tigers**, Indian elephants, sloth bears, Gangetic dolphins and an extraordinary bird population. Kaziranga National Park is located partly in **Golaghat District** and partly in **Nagaon District** of Assam and covers an area of 430km². It lies in the flood plains of the Brahmaputra and annual flooding and burning has maintained the grasslands predominant in the west. It became an official national park in 1974, but was established as a reserved forest in 1908, a game sanctuary in 1916, a wildlife sanctuary in 1950 and as a World Heritage site in 1985.*

DAY 3 Early start for journey to Majuli, the world's largest river island, increasingly threatened by climate change. Short ferry ride across the mighty Brahmaputra River to Majuli. After settling into your comfortable bamboo hut, stroll around and savour the atmosphere of this unique island life. Overnight in Majuli. Meal plan: B,L,D

*One of the world's largest river islands, **Majuli Island** is located in the **Brahmaputra River** and runs for 80km from east to west and 15km north to south and a total area of 875km². It used to be much bigger than this but has decreased as a result of **erosion** from the river. The island has a population of 150,000 and there are 243 villages. With a natural and cultural heritage site with water bodies covering most of the areas, Majuli attracts a wide **range of birds**. Aside from the **rice field landscapes, fish traps and water meadows, the local Mising people and Satras** make the island a fascinating place.*

DAY 4 Explore Majuli – visit the island's ancient satras (rare Hindu Vaishnavite monasteries worshipping Lord Vishnu). Pop into the local mask shops and pottery workshops and watch master craftsmen at work. Bikes can be hired and a bike ride is a good way of exploring the island. Overnight in Majuli. Meal plan: B,L,D

*There are almost **30 Satras** in Majuli and each Satra acts as a cultural activity centre for its region in festivals and occasions. Formed by the philosopher from Assam, **Sankardev**, the religion is based on the **caste system and idol worship**. Dance and play-acting of scenes from the holy Hindu scripture (Bhagavad Gita) have an important role. Pottery in Majuli is also very famous because it is made from beaten clay that is burnt in ovens fired with driftwood.*

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DAY 5 After breakfast, cross by ferry to mainland Assam. Drive through the low-lying terrain, passing perfectly manicured tea estates and paddy fields and cross into Nagaland. Stop at Dimapur for overnight. Meals: B,L,D

DAY 6 Drive to Kohima for the Hornbill Festival. Experience the sights and sounds of Naga culture. Watch tribes in colourful and distinct costumes perform traditional Naga dances and ceremonies. Have a drink of the local rice beer and be part of this unique festival. Overnight in Kohima. Meals: B,L,D

*Nagaland's capital, **Kohima**, sits a top ridges and hilltops among forests. There are **16 tribes** in Nagaland, each having their own dialect, customs and traditional costumes, but all love music, dance and pageantry. The social position of a Naga is defined by the number of **bone necklaces** he wears. The Nagas are said to belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock, a race whose presence was first noted ten centuries before Christ, are mostly Christians and are fluent in English. The **Hornbill Festival** happens in the small village of **Kisama** (10km from Kohima) and various Naga groups come for a cultural, dancing and sporting week dressed in **warrior costume**. As most of the region is dependent on **agriculture**, all their festivals are based around this. The Government of Nagaland organises the Hornbill Festival every year in the first week of December to encourage **intertribal interaction and cultural heritage**. The Festival is named after **the hornbill, the state bird of Nagaland**.*

DAYS 7- 8 Hornbill Festival. More demonstrations of Naga culture depicted through song and dance. Learn about the Naga heritage and their way of life. Also visit WWII sites. Overnight in Kohima. Meals: B,L,D

*The **war cemetery** contains graves of the **1200 British and Indian Soldiers** who died in 1944 in the Battle of Kohima in **World War Two**. This was the beginning of what the Japanese thought would be their defeat of India. However, this **64-day battle** proved to be a turning point as it was the **first defeat of the Japanese by the British**. The Naga people aided the British and Indian soldiers in any way they could to ensure defeat, such as acting as guides to the land, porters and combatants.*

DAY 9 After breakfast, set off for the small hill-top town of Mokochung, the intellectual and cultural capital of Nagaland. Learn about the Ao Naga culture. Wander out to the main park and climb the watchtower for excellent views of the surrounding scenery. Overnight in Mokochung. Meals: B,L,D

***Ao** is the main language of the Ao tribe. They are famous for their **colourful dances**. Their distinct shawl is designed with red, black and white threads.*

DAY 10 After breakfast, drive to Mon, home to the famous Konyak tribe. Although headhunting has been banned, one can see other signs of a vibrant culture - tattooed faces, elaborate headresses and skilled craftsmanship. Overnight in Mon. Meals: B,L,D

*All Konyak carry a **dao** – a machete traditionally used for head-hunting up until 50 years ago. The older villagers may still wear traditional costume. The Konyaks are also Christians and this bonds all the Nagas.*

DAY 11 Spend the day exploring more of Mon and discover more about the traditions of the Konyak tribe, the most traditional and elaborate of the Naga tribes. Free time to wander around and soak in the atmosphere of a place time has forgotten. Overnight in Mon. Meal plan: B,L,D

DAY 12 Breakfast, then onward drive to Dibrugarh in Assam. Dibrugarh is the largest tea-exporting town in India. Visit a tea estate and learn about tea-picking and cultivation. Free evening. Overnight in Dibrugarh. Meals: B,L,D

DAY 13 After breakfast transfer to the airport. Fly out of Dibrugarh to onward destination. Either connect for international flight back home, or add-on one of our other exciting tours. Meals: B



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Accommodation
Most meals (refer to itinerary for meal plan)
Activity fees (rafting, safari)

Entrance fees to sites
Drivers and guides
Climate Care contribution

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In addition to our scheduled group departures, **private and tailor-made trips** can be arranged that include some or all of the places on this itinerary. Please contact us with your requirements (e: info@traveltheunknown.com, t: 0845 053 0352) and we will happily put together an itinerary for you and your group. No trip is too long or too short.