



African & Indian
Explorations

CALCUTTA, ASSAM & EASTERN HIMALAYAS

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Calcutta/Kolkata:

Once known as the second city of the Empire, this heaving metropolis is a treasure house of colonial and colonial Indian architecture, museums, culture and colour. If this was the seat of the Raj and the heart of the colonial economy for much of Britain's presence in India, it was also one of the great centres of the Indian renaissance and reform movements. Our tours, with specialist guides explores this rich and complex inheritance. For those interested in history, architecture and culture we would urge a minimum of 3 nights here.



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Brahmaputra River Cruise:



One of the great rivers of Asia, the Brahmaputra rises in central Tibet to flow eastwards along the Tibetan plateau to finally pierce the mountain barrier north of Assam and flowing southwards and a little west, creating the vast fertile flood plain through Assam and Bangladesh that supports one of the highest human populations anywhere in the world. The cruise on this river aboard beautifully adapted river boats reveals this inner world of isolated villages, river towns, wildlife and landscapes in a completely unique way. 4 & 7 day cruises.

Arunachal Pradesh



to the Hindus in the plains. It is an absolute treasure-house for the curious traveller. One of the great

Situated at the cusp of India, China and Tibet at the junction of the Indian and Malayan regions, the state of Arunachal Pradesh – recently opened for tourism - is truly a melting pot of cultures, ethnicities, languages, wildlife, geology and landscapes. The eastern Himalayas are a region of immense biodiversity – amongst the world's 28 bio-diversity hotspots. The mountains are deeply serrated and the valleys precipitous stretching from near sea-level to perma-frost in some cases and encompassing in a single slope all the habitats from sub-tropical to arctic! The resulting fragmentation and isolation of the human populations that inhabit these valleys has resulted in a bewildering cultural and linguistic diversity where one valley is totally separate from the next! Buddhists from the high border of Tibet, mix with animists from the lower jungles giving way



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monasteries of Eastern Tibet – Tawang – falls within Arunachal borders and can be visited. You can combine scenic Arunachal Pradesh with its basic accommodation but stupendous scenery, cultural treasures and wealth of birdlife with the extraordinary wildlife in Kaziranga and Nameri Tiger Reserve and then luxuriate in superb small accommodations like the converted plantation bungalows in Assam of Mancotta Chang or Balipara on the Arunachal Pradesh border. Or of course head off to the Darjeeling Hills to Glenburn for some serious relaxation .

Nagaland

While the colourful and unique Naga life-styles are slowly being replaced by the sameness of modern lifestyles, much yet remains of the rich cultural heritage of this great people living between India and Myanmar. Kohima is also the scene of the great battle of World War 2 when the Japanese were finally halted.

Sikkim & Darjeeling Hills



The mountains of North Bengal and Sikkim are amongst the most beautiful in the Himalayas. We use some lovely little properties like Samthar Farmhouse where your host is the fascinating General Jimmy Singh (Retd.), the charming and simple Heritage Farmhouse at Yangsum in scenic Western Sikkim within reach of the great monastery of Pemayangtse and Bamboo Resort 10 minutes from Rumtek Monastery and 30 minutes from Gangtok town. And finally the wonderful Glenburn Tea estate – a 4

room planter's bungalow beautifully and thoughtfully restored by the owners. This is an area that lives in the shadow of Kangchenjunga and when the weather is clear one is treated to awe-inspiring views of the giants of the eastern Himalayan range. You can use just one of these places or combine them all for an exhilarating mountain holiday. You can walk, enjoy some of the best birding and scenery in the subcontinent, take in the Buddhist Lepcha and Hindu Nepali culture with visits combining great monasteries, small untouched mountain villages and remote temples. Ask about our walking trips, orchid and rhododendron tours and treks across the eastern Himalayas.



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Wildlife & Bird watching



The dense jungles and range of habitats encountered in the northeast support an incredible wealth of bird life – not just in the well-known parks of Kaziranga, Nameri and Manas but right across the lush forests of Arunachal with places like Eagles Nest being particularly important. Namdapha in eastern Arunachal and all the high mountain country yield rich results for the birder. North Bengal and Sikkim are equally productive and our birding trips include not just the well-known

areas like Lava and western Sikkim but several other lesser known areas. We organise birding trips with excellent guides for individuals and couples as also for small groups.

For mega fauna – no place could be better known than Kaziranga – home of the largest population of Indian Rhinoceros. It is a magical lace full of elephants, wild buffalo, swamp deer, hog deer, wild boar, a host of smaller animals, perhaps the highest density of tigers (though rarely seen) in the world and other rarities like hoolock gibbon, capped langurs and a multitude of birds. Manas Tiger Reserve on the Bhutan border is famous for its golden langurs and matchless scenery – although tiger and other wildlife are recovering from several years of insurgency and poaching.

Walking & Trekking

Predictably, all of these mountains are prime areas for trekking with spectacular scenery – especially



in the clear skies of the post-monsoon months of October and November. In North Bengal and Sikkim the skyline is dominated by the enormous bulk of Kangchenjunga. But as much as the scenery these treks are a fantastic way of experiencing these unique and wonderful cultures and



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enjoying the tremendous diversity of plant and bird life. The Bailey Trail in Arunachal is a unique itinerary which mixes superb scenery, culture and bird life. For those who prefer day walks – we have a selection of small lodges that provide guides and picnics for you to explore the country at your leisure while returning to the comforts of a proper bed, hot water, good food and excellent company.

Riding



Perhaps unexpectedly, Assam has some of the best riding in India at Dibrugarh where you stay at the very stylishly adapted Mancotta Chang Tea Planters bungalow. The owner, Manoj Jalan and his wife Vineeta are third generation planters in this home of Assam tea. Manoj is a fine rider himself and head of the Endurance Riding and Indian representative of the FEI. A stay here combines extremely well with any other destination in the northeast apart from providing opportunities to explore a working garden and the tribal areas of Eastern and Northern Arunachal.