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Things to See & Do

There are several day hiking trails within the park, mostly connected to the eight natural salt licks found in the area. The hikes towards the west cover Kanamakura, Kukulung, Sukuja, Goverkhunda and Gyalyong Khola and Changarzam. Kukulung and Goverkhunda can be also accessed from Changarzam. Towards the east, there are routes to Rabang from Mathanguri (India) and Norbugang from Panbhang. It is a three-hour walk to Panbhang from the Park road head and you can boat down to Manas from the confluence, which takes an estimated 30 minutes.

Take a refreshing plunge in the river, look for frolicking pods of rivers dolphins or take an elephant-back ride through the jungles and grasslands of the park where you encounter colorful hornbills taking wing, rhinoceroses munching in the grass or golden langurs swinging in the trees.

Getting There

Paro is your first port of call if you're flying in. Transfer to Thimphu, the nation's capital. Then drive south to Gelephu, a subtropical border town, before continuing on to the Assamese town of Kokrajhar, and then to Panbhang. Or you can also drive from Paro to Thimphu to Trongsa to Zhemgang and Gelephu (a minimum four days by car)



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The Royal Manas National Park





The Royal Manas National Park

Take a safari on elephant back, meet tribal Khengpa people and stay in their traditional bamboo homes (with tastings of the local home-brewed chaang!) Raft down the broad sweep of the Manas river, neighboring the Indian state of Assam and home to exotic Golden Langurs, Gangetic Dolphins and the Asian One-horned Rhinoceros. Experience an unforgettable stay in one of the world's most biologically outstanding sites. Take a walk on the wild side with this once-in-a-life adventure!

Regional Background

Because the Manas river winds like a serpent through the 1,023 square-kilometer park, the area was named Manas after the Hindu Goddess of snakes. Designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1996, this lush region hosts a wealth of animal and plant species, which makes it one of the world's most biodiversity rich sites. Located in south central Bhutan, it is connected along the south with India's Manas Tiger Reserve, a World Heritage Site.



The park occupies a broad low-lying alluvial terrace in the foothills of the outer Himalaya. The Manas river—fed by Bhutan's Chamkhar Chu, Mangde Chu and Dangme Chu rivers—eventually joins the Brahmaputra in India to form one of the great river chains of Asia. Much of the park's area is characterized by a rugged, mountainous terrain with moderately steep slopes.

The climate variations in Manas are substantial. It is hot and humid with up to 76 percent relative humidity from May to September. During monsoons, one may experience thunderstorms that dump up to 5,000 mms of rain, flooding the reserve and making it nearly impassable. The park has three main types of vegetation: sub-Himalayan alluvial semi-evergreen forest, east Himalayan mixed moist and dry deciduous forests (the commonest type), and riparian grasslands. Low alluvial savanna woodland and semi-evergreen alluvial grassland covers almost 45 percent of the Park. The riparian grasslands provide ideal tiger habitat, and are well suited to the herds of wild water buffalo, gaur and barasingha, elephants and water birds. There are 43 different grass species, and a diversity of trees and shrubs such as Dillenia pentagyna, which dominates the swamp forest, silk cotton or Bombax ceiba, a dominant of the savanna woodlands, and Phyllanthus emblica. Shrubs include Clerodendrum, Leea, Grewia, Premna, Mussaenda, Sonchus, Osbeckia and Blumera.

Manas is home to the highly endangered Royal Bengal Tiger, Asian elephant, greater one-horned rhinoceros, clouded leopard, Himalayan black bear, Gangetic dolphin and the rare golden langur, a primate of extraordinary grace and beauty with its long, silky blond fur.

More than 365 species of birds have been officially record-



ed in the Park of which 16 of the bird species are endemic. Species found here include the globally threatened rufous-necked hornbill, Pallas fishing eagle, great white-bellied heron, spotted wren-babbler, blue-headed rock thrush, emerald cuckoo, white rumped and Indian vultures, lesser kestrel, white throated bush chat and the black breasted parrot bill. About 50 species of reptiles and 11 species of snakes inhabit the park and includes the vine snake, flying snake, the banded krait and the king cobra.

Many of the park's more than 900 types of plants have commercial, medicinal, traditional and religious significance. There are various species of bamboo, rhododendrons and orchids.

The areas bordering Manas is home to the Khengpa people, among the earliest settlers of Bhutan. They have lived amicably on the fringes of the Park for centuries and their lives revolve around ancient slash and burn cultivation practices. With little or no desire for modern amenities, the Khengpas are a people apart.

Although the park is open the year round the best times to visit are early spring from March to May and in late autumn from October to December. Log cabins have been built to provide a comfortable stay for visitors to the park. Basic amenities such as running water and electricity are also available.

