

Arunachal Pradesh

Mammal Watching

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive Delhi, transfer to hotel

Flights from Europe will arrive into Delhi during the day or evening and we'll head straight to a pleasant hotel close to the airport.

Day 2

Fly to Dibrugarh and drive to Deban, Namdapha

A morning flight takes to Dibrugarh. The views of the Himalaya are wonderful with line after line of majestic snowy peaks visible in the usually clear skies. We'll pass Everest and then mighty Kanchenjunga (it looks bigger because it's closer!) before following the immense braided channels of the Brahmaputra up its wide valley through Assam. As we descend the snowy peaks soar away into Tibet to the north and steep forest-clad mountains rise to the south – a breathtaking setting. The journey to Namdapha is still long but endlessly fascinating and with plenty of wildlife to keep us occupied en route.

Days 3 – 9(am)

Namdapha National Park including three nights at Deban and four nights camping at camps inside the national park.

Nestled up against the mighty Himalayan peaks right in the far northeastern corner of India, indeed right at the far-eastern end of little-known Arunachal Pradesh, lies the most biodiverse reserve in all Asia - Namdapha. This extraordinary place is almost completely off the tourist radar as it's a long way from anywhere and there's little in the way of facilities. Likely we'll have it all to ourselves. Which is of course brilliant for mammal watching!

Multiple factors have resulted in the amazing diversity of life found here. There's a huge altitudinal range so the mountains in the reserve are high enough to support Snow Leopards yet down at base there are Clouded Leopards. In fact there are no less than eight species of cat inside the two thousand square kilometres of protected territory. There's also a tremendous variety of habitats. Tropical and sub-tropical rainforests cloak the slopes either side of the wide river gravels of the Noa Dehing, the main southern tributary of the Brahmaputra, and above are fabulous epiphyte-laden oak woodlands and bamboo brakes, higher still coniferous forest, rhododendron shrubberies and alpine slopes.

We'll start (and end) our visit right down at the lowest elevations where the wide gravels of the Noa Dehing River has forest clad slopes rising on both sides with views up to high ridges beyond the forest – the higher ones may be snow-

covered! Our first morning will see the air resounding to the calls of Eastern Hoolock Gibbons in the forest around Deban. We'll soon locate them. The males have rich blackish fur surmounted by white eyebrows whilst the females are a buffy colour. At night Red Giant Flying Squirrel is in the same trees.

Above Deban there are no roads. Only wide elephant tracks used to trade with villages on the Burmese side of the border. From our base by the main river, hardly far above sea-level, we'll follow these tracks for several days staying at camps in open glades en route. Distances are not far, but we'll be on foot, and camping. The potential rewards are great. We'll concentrate on the mammals. We'll camp by some sulphurous mud springs known to be visited by many of Namdapha's mammals – Gaur, Hog Deer and Wild Boar are all quite common and Himalayan Serow is likely too. Walks from these camps at night will reveal Binturong (we've seen the rare tawny phase here), Bengal Slow Loris, Hog Badger, and Hodgson's Flying Squirrel which are plentiful. These are beautiful animals with an orange-maroon body, white underside and a long furry orange-grey tail with a black tip.

Daylight will see us searching for Arunachal Macaques, Stump-tail Macaques and elegant Capped Langurs, whilst Assamese Macaques are common. Himalayan Striped Squirrels and Malayan Giant Squirrel are frequent and we'll no doubt encounter charismatic Yellow-throated Marten more than once. Up amongst the oak forest where the contorted trees are festooned in mosses, lichens, ferns and orchids we'll find various Flying Squirrels and Malay Treeshrew. Namdapha's birds are legendary and we'll see many superb species notably Beautiful Nuthatch, Himalayan Cutia, Red-headed trogon, and a tremendous range of woodpeckers, babblers and laughingthrushes.

Finding mammals in the open Savannahs of East Africa is relatively straightforward. Finding them in the deep forests of Namdapha is an altogether different and harder job. We can during our stay expect to see most (or all) of the species mentioned above. However there are many more that we'd like to see! These include several shy and cryptic species. It's probably fair to say that we might well see one of the species mentioned in the following paragraph, if we see two we're doing well, three, well that would be marvellous!

We'll of course be hoping for cats. Marbled Cats particularly like these mid-level forests and we can hope for one of the rarer species too. As mentioned Namdapha has eight species of cat. The only one we can be reasonably assured of seeing is Leopard Cat. Any of the rest would be a bonus, or perhaps not, Tigers are one of them! You can find some brief trap camera history on the web for Namdapha including images of Marbled and Golden Cats. It will of course be chance if we come across any of these cats but we'll certainly put lots of effort in and the use of modern technology like thermal imaging 'scopes will help. Fishing Cat is known to occur along the rivers and the wide river gravels at the base of the hills also gives good viewing potential so sightings of Crab-eating Mongoose and Smooth Indian Otter are possible. Very much in the hoped-for category are either species of Ferret-Badger. Dhole hunt in these forests but are difficult to come

across. There are bears – both Sloth Bear and Asiatic Black Bears are found here – and several species of Deer including the diminutive Leaf Muntjac.

Days 9(pm) & 10

Devan to Frogmouth Camp. Roing Grassland & Tiwarigaon

The second part of the tour takes us into the Mishmi Hills where we'll explore the largely pristine habitats of the lower Dibang Valley. Around Frogmouth Camp we'll visit Roing's grasslands and remote Tiwarigaon where we'll look for Leopard Cat, Spotted Linsang, Asian Small-clawed Otter, Large Indian Civet and Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine. Small Indian Civets are tolerably common.

Days 11 - 13

Mishmi Hills: Mayudia Pass

An exciting area lies in store for us either side of the Mayudia Pass. The Pass is at 2400m and will give us access to a whole range of species most notably Red Panda. At this level we are amongst a forest of Hemlocks and an understorey of rhododendrons, magnolias and bamboo! Another special species here is the Red Goral found on the steep hillsides just north of the pass and the smartly-attired Grey-headed Giant Flying Squirrel. We'll hope to encounter the Mishmi subspecies of Takin and, a little lower down, the local endemic (probably!) Mishmi Hills Giant Flying Squirrel! Asiatic Black Bear can be seen on the open slopes above the pass.

Day 14

Tinsukia: Dibru-Saikhowa & Maguri Beel

Dibru-Saikhowa was only eighty years ago a rainforest but during the great Assam earthquake of 1950, a large part of the area sank by a few metres, resulting in regular flooding. The natural vegetation then gradually changed to tropical deciduous forest with salix swamps,

By the first decade of the present century, the 30 metre wide Dangori river and 50 metre wide Dibru river had turned into a single kilometre-wide river – a classic example of "river capture"! The entire national park is now dominated by tall grass and degraded woodland with some salix swamps. Whilst a number of mammals have disappeared due to these changes, the population of Wild Water Buffalo is doing well. The river has a good population of Ganges River Dolphin. Pig-tailed Macaques still occur in the area and Dhole can occasionally be seen. Hog Deer are frequent and we might catch sight of the feral horses, descendants of horses stationed here with the British Army during the World War II.

Day 15

Dehing-Patkai National Park then flight to Delhi

Hollong, a tall dipterocarp tree reaching 50m in height or more, dominates remnant patches of forest in the Dehing-Patkai National Park just south of Tinsukia. We'll spend the morning here in a landscape that still has a sizeable population of Indian Elephants and a rich assemblage of other mammals have been recorded

including Malayan Sun Bears and Asiatic Black Bears, Binturong, Dhole, Sambar, and seven species of primate. We'll start early but with just a morning we should not expect too much! In the afternoon we'll catch a flight to Delhi.

Day 16

Departure Europe

Mid-morning we'll head to the airport to catch our flights back to Europe.

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the trip report from our previous trip to Arunachal Pradesh – note that it's from a general wildlife tour though not a dedicated mammal-watching trip. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

To Book a place on this Holiday please click on the 'Book this Tour' button found on the right-hand side of the page where you downloaded this itinerary, or fill in the booking form which you can download from <https://www.greentours.co.uk/booking/> (also found in the Greentours brochure) and post to Greentours, 8 Eliot Close, Armitage, Rugeley, WS15 4UP, UK. Tel +44 (0) 1298 83563. After booking your place you'll receive a confirmation letter and a detailed information pack will be dispatched twelve weeks prior to departure. Mammal, butterfly and bird checklists are available.