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Kaziranga National Park

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Kaziranga National Park

Kaziranga is a wet, grassy floodplain in Assam. It holds the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses. Its floods are not a problem to remove. They are the process that keeps the park alive.

1 Where is Kaziranga and what kind of land is it?

Kaziranga lies on the flood plain of the Brahmaputra River in Assam. The ground is mostly flat. It slopes gently from east to west.



A one-horned rhinoceros at Kaziranga National Park, Assam. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Which districts does it cover?

The Tiger Reserve spreads across three civil districts. They are Golaghat, Nagaon and Sonitpur. The reserve sits on the foot hills of Karbi Anglong district.

Which rivers shape it?

The Brahmaputra forms the northern and eastern boundary. The Mora Diphlu forms the southern boundary. The Diphlu is a tributary of the Brahmaputra. The soil is alluvial, which means silt laid down by rivers.

How big is it?

The Nagaon district page gives the older national park as about 430 square kilometres. The wider Tiger Reserve is larger. NTCA lists a core of 482.0385 square kilometres and a buffer of 573.8555. Together that is 1055.894 square kilometres.

> **Quick check 1.** Kaziranga lies on the flood plain of the Brahmaputra river. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ntca.gov.in; nagaon.assam.gov.in

2 How did Kaziranga go from a reserve to a national park?

Kaziranga was protected in steps over about seventy years. Each step gave the rhino stronger cover.

Why was a reserve first needed?

Officials feared the one-horned rhino was close to extinction. A British officer warned that killing females and young animals had brought the species to the verge of extinction. The government then considered an “asylum” for the rhino.

What happened between 1905 and 1950?

The move made Kaziranga a game reserve in 1905. In 1916 the game reserve became a game sanctuary. In 1950 game sanctuaries were renamed wildlife sanctuaries.

What happened in the 1950s and 1960s?

The Assam government introduced the Assam Rhinoceros Preservation Bill in December 1954. In 1963 the Indian Board for Wildlife recommended national parks for Kaziranga and Manas. That led to the Assam National Park Act of 1968.

When did it become a national park?

Under that Act, the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary was declared a national park in 1974. SPRF says January 1974. The Nagaon district page says 1974.

> **Quick check 2.** Kaziranga became a national park in 1985. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: sprf.in; nagaon.assam.gov.in

3 Why is Kaziranga a World Heritage Site?

UNESCO inscribed Kaziranga as a natural site in 1985. Two natural criteria won it the listing: (ix) and (x).

What does criterion (ix) mean?

Criterion (ix) is about ongoing natural processes. For Kaziranga it covers river bank erosion, sedimentation and the formation of new land and new water bodies. It also covers the succession between grasslands and woodlands. That is why exam setters call it an “ongoing ecological process”.

What does criterion (x) mean?

Criterion (x) is about biodiversity. Kaziranga was inscribed as the world’s major stronghold of the Indian one-horned rhino. It has the single largest population of the species.

How big is the listed area?

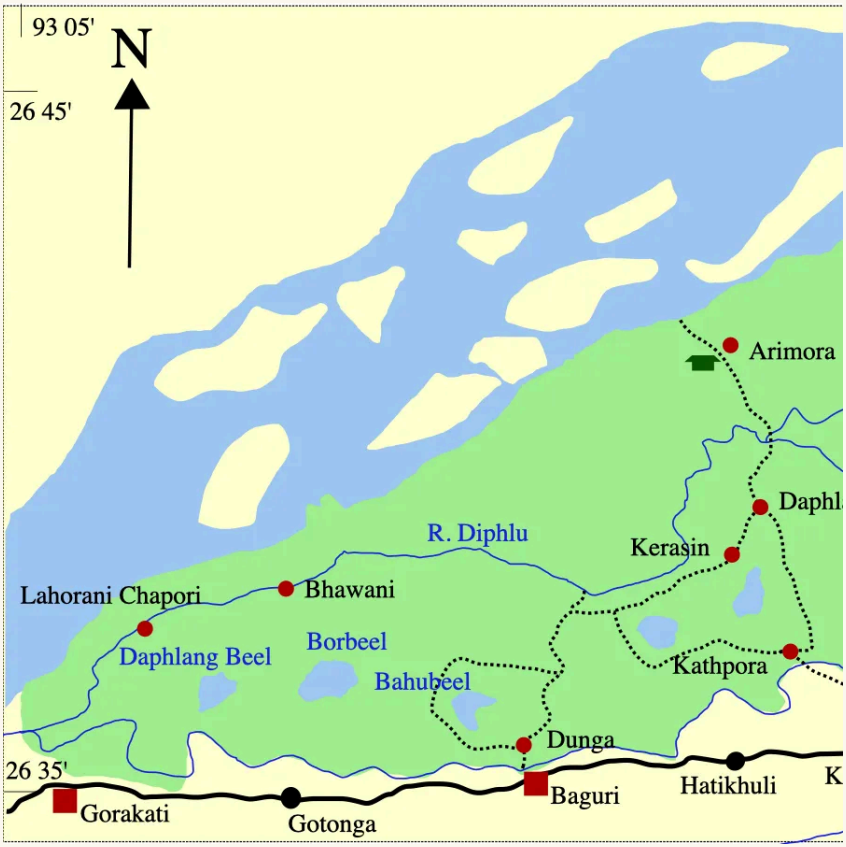
UNESCO gives the property as 42,996 hectares. That is about 430 square kilometres. It says Kaziranga is the largest undisturbed area of the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.

> **Quick check 3.** UNESCO uses criterion (ix) for river processes and criterion (x) for the rhino and biodiversity. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Sources: web.archive.org; sprf.in

4 Why are the grasslands and annual floods so important?

Wet alluvial grassland covers nearly two-thirds of the park. Two natural forces keep it open. They are annual flooding and burning.



Kaziranga National Park, Assam: the Brahmaputra (top), the Diphlu River, park ranges, and NH-37 along the southern edge. Map: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

What does the Brahmaputra build?

The river keeps changing its course. It leaves behind sand bars, flood-formed lakes and raised ground. The lakes are called beels. The raised areas are called chaporis. The grassland is formed, supported and affected by erosion and silt deposition.

Why do floods matter for animals?

The habitat is prone to annual flooding. Special steps are taken to protect wildlife during these floods. Many animals move outside the park when water rises. There they face hunting and attack for crop damage.

Where do animals go during floods?

Forested areas of Karbi Anglong have a boundary with the reserve. They act as both corridor and refuge for animals during floods. NTCA also lists three linkages with forests of the Karbi Anglong Hills.

What about the land that is lost?

UNESCO says river migration cost some 5,000 hectares of forest land from 1925 to 1986. So the Brahmaputra both builds and takes away land.

> **Quick check 4.** Wet alluvial grasslands cover nearly two-thirds of the park. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: mee-tr.wii.gov.in; ntca.gov.in; web.archive.org

5 Which are the Big Five, and how many rhinos live there?

The Big Five of Kaziranga are the tiger, rhinoceros, elephant, wild buffalo and eastern swamp deer. The Wildlife Institute of India names these as the five important mammals.

How many rhinos were counted in 2022?

The March 2022 census counted 2613 one-horned rhinos. The 2018 census had counted 2413. So the count rose by exactly 200. Of the 2613, about 1653 were adults. Drones were used for a sample recheck for the first time.

What share of world rhinos live here?

The Wildlife Institute says the reserve supports the world's largest one-horned rhino population. It says the number is around 2200 and nearly two-thirds of the world population. The 2022 count is newer and larger. Use the figure the question gives you.

What about tigers?

Kaziranga was notified a tiger reserve in 2006, says the Wildlife Institute. UNESCO says the park has one of the highest densities of tiger in the country. NTCA says the 2010 assessment gave the landscape 125 tigers, the largest population in the North East.

Which other species matter?

NTCA records 35 mammal species and 480 bird species. It also names the hoolock gibbon, capped langur and Gangetic river dolphin. UNESCO says the Ganges dolphin lives in some closed oxbow lakes. The hoolock gibbon is the only ape found in India.

Which birds visit?

BirdLife International has marked the reserve as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. Winter visitors from Central Asia include the lesser white-fronted goose and Baer's pochard duck.

> **Quick check 5.** The Big Five of Kaziranga include the Great Indian Bustard. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: mee-tr.wii.gov.in; theshillongtimes.com; ntca.gov.in

6 What threatens Kaziranga and how is it protected?

The park has the highest legal protection in India. Even so, it faces real pressure on all sides.

Which laws protect it?

UNESCO names the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Indian Forest Act, 1927. It also names the Assam Forest Regulation 1891. The Assam Forest Department manages the site under a legally approved management plan.

What are the main threats?

UNESCO lists rhino poaching, riverbank erosion and invasive species. It also lists tourism pressure, heavy highway traffic and livestock grazing. Poaching of rhinos for their horns is a serious threat, says NTCA.

Why does the highway matter?

National Highway 37 runs along the southern border. UNESCO says it has brought more settlements that disturb animal movement. The Nagaon district page notes that rhinos and elephants are seen straying

near the highway.

What is being done on the ground?

The Wildlife Institute found a strong protection network of anti-poaching camps and trained staff. The Assam government allowed forest staff to use firearms and gave them immunity. Villages near the fringe help animals cross the highway safely during floods.

What has the recent record been?

Assam's Chief Minister has said that no rhino was poached in Kaziranga in 2025. This is a government claim. Treat it as a reported claim rather than an audited number.

> **Quick check 6.** NH-37 runs along the southern border of the park. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: web.archive.org; mee-tr.wii.gov.in; nenow.in

7 How is the park growing, and how many people visit?

Kaziranga's area has grown in steps. Visitor numbers have grown even faster.

What happened in May 2025?

The Assam Cabinet gave final approval on 21 May 2025 for the sixth addition to the park. The addition is 47,306.33 hectares. Villages such as Gopal Jarani, Gonaitapu, Jobre and Thute Chapori were left out after public consultation.

Is the expansion complete?

Not fully. The Wildlife Institute warned that many state notifications for added areas are only preliminary. They had not been taken to their logical conclusion. UNESCO's page says there have been six additions to the park area.

How many tourists came?

The park recorded 548,319 tourists between April 2025 and 28 May 2026. That includes 515,554 Indian and 32,765 foreign visitors. The financial year 2025-26 alone had about 4.68 lakh visitors. The year before had about 4.06 lakh.

Is there news about rare animals?

Reports mention sightings of the rare golden tiger. They also mention more Gangetic dolphin tourism and the return of migratory birds such as the smew.

> **Quick check 7.** The census of March 2022 counted 2,613 rhinos. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: sentinelassam.com; nenow.in; kaziranganationalpark-india.com

8 Which exam traps should you avoid?

- Criterion (ix) is about ongoing ecological and biological processes. Criterion (x) is about biodiversity and threatened species.
- National park status came in 1974. World Heritage status came in 1985. The Tiger Reserve came later, in 2006 by the Wildlife Institute and 2007 by UNESCO.

- The rhino count of 2,613 is from the March 2022 census. The 2018 count was 2,413.
- The Big Five are the tiger, rhino, elephant, wild buffalo and eastern swamp deer.
- UNESCO says Kaziranga has the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses.
- The 5.48 lakh visitor figure covers April 2025 to 28 May 2026. The 2025-26 financial year was 4.68 lakh.

What did UPSC ask?

UPSC asked which of these does not pass through Kaziranga: the Brahmaputra, the Diphlu, NH-37 or a railway track. The answer is the railway track. The Brahmaputra, the Diphlu and NH-37 all touch the park.

What is the memory hook?

Floodplain, two criteria, Big Five, 2,613 rhinos, park 1974, heritage 1985.

Sources: nagaon.assam.gov.in; web.archive.org

Practice MCQs

1. Which national park in Assam, home to the one-horned rhinoceros, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985?

A. Manas National Park

B. Kaziranga National Park

C. Nameri National Park

D. Dibru-Saikhowa National Park

See answer ↓

2. In which year was Kaziranga formally declared a National Park?

A. 1966

B. 2006

C. 1985

D. 1974

See answer ↓

3. According to the March 2022 census, how many Indian one-horned rhinoceroses did Kaziranga hold?

A. 1,855

B. 2,613

C. 4,014

D. 3,262

See answer ↓

4. UNESCO's Criterion (ix), under which Kaziranga was inscribed as a World Heritage Site, mainly recognises which of these?

A. Its species count alone, without regard to habitat processes

B. Ongoing ecological and geomorphological processes driven by the Brahmaputra's annual flooding

C. The site's cultural and architectural heritage

D. Its scenic and aesthetic value as a landscape

See answer ↓

5. Kaziranga was declared a Tiger Reserve in which year, under the national programme founded by which conservationist?

A. 2006, under M.S. Swaminathan's green revolution programme

B. 2006, under Kailash Sankhala's Project Tiger

C. 1985, under UNESCO's own biosphere reserve programme

D. 1973, under Kailash Sankhala's Project Tiger

See answer ↓

6. How many tourists did Kaziranga National Park record in the 2025-26 season, its best on record?

A. 8.2 lakh

B. 2.1 lakh

C. 5.48 lakh

D. 4.06 lakh

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** SPRF says Kaziranga was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985. UNESCO says it holds the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** SPRF says the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary was declared a national park in January 1974. The Assam National Park Act of 1968 gave the legal basis. 1985 is the World Heritage year, and 2006 is the Tiger Reserve. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** The Shillong Times reports that the March 2022 census counted 2,613 rhinos. That was up by about 200 from 2,413. Drones were used for the first time in the count. WII gives an older figure of around 2,200. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** UNESCO ties criterion (ix) to river fluctuations of the Brahmaputra system. These cause bank erosion, sedimentation and new land. Criterion (x) is the one about the rhino and biodiversity. WII adds that erosion and silt shaped the grasslands. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** WII says Kaziranga was notified a tiger reserve in 2006. Project Tiger is the national scheme, and Kailash Sankhala is linked to it. UNESCO's page gives 2007, so the sources differ by a year. ↑ Q5
6. **C.** NE Now reports 5,48,319 tourists from April 2025 to 28 May 2026. The financial year 2025-26 alone was 4.68 lakh, against 4.06 lakh in 2024-25. Check which period a question means. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** NTCA says the reserve is in the flood plain of the Brahmaputra. ↑ 1
2. **False.** The national park came in January 1974. World Heritage status came in 1985. ↑ 2
3. **True.** Criterion (ix) is about processes. Criterion (x) is about species and habitat. ↑ 3
4. **True.** Annual flooding and burning keep them open. ↑ 4
5. **False.** The five are the tiger, rhino, elephant, wild buffalo and eastern swamp deer. ↑ 5
6. **True.** UNESCO notes the highway and its traffic as a pressure on the park. ↑ 6
7. **True.** It was up by 200 from 2,413 in 2018. ↑ 7

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