

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's Statehood Day, Manipur, India Australian Ladies Team

The Australian Ladies Polo Team was invited to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's Statehood Day in Manipur, India from the 15<sup>th</sup> January to the 21<sup>st</sup> January. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Manipur Statehood Day Women's Polo Tournament is part of Manipur Tourism's campaign to save the unique and endangered Manipuri pony as well as promote Polo tourism in Manipur - the Birthplace of Modern Polo. The team consisted of Chloe Warren, Whitney Warren, Alessia Russo, Indiana Bennetto and Billie Mascart. This year, two teams from Manipur participated as well as Indian Polo Association, Kenya and USA.

These tournaments encourage exclusive use of the indigenous Manipuri pony only and are played at the oldest living polo ground in Imphal at Mapal Kangjeibung.

Upon arrival, The Australian Team were extremely well received by Manipur Tourism as well as the event organisers.

Once settled in, the team took to the field to practice on the Manipuri pony and adjust to the height difference. They were given 46 inch mallets and played a practice game against the Kenyan Ladies team. "I was pleasantly surprised at the agility and strength that the Manipuri ponies had. We whizzed around and had one of the best experiences we've ever had on a polo pitch." Billie Mascart, Captain of the Australian Ladies Team.

Australia was placed in pool B alongside the USA and Manipur (Marjing). Pool A consisted of Kenya, Manipur (Thangjing) and IPA.

Following the parade and opening ceremony, the first game saw Australia up against the local team Manipur (Marjing). Thanks to the practice game and solid team work the Australians managed to win the opening game 6 goals to 2. "Going into the game our team was confident, however with the unknown of how the Manipuri (Marjing) team would play or line up there was definitely some nerves. Our team played to our strengths, which ultimately payed off. The game was played in good spirit and I can honestly say I've never had so much fun playing polo.", Alessia Russo.



The semi finals were played against the USA and despite a strong start from the Australians leading 2 - 0 at half time, the USA managed to come back and even the score in the final chukker. In the last 30 seconds of the game they managed to run away with the ball and score the decider. Final score was 3-2. Unfortunately for Australia this drew their campaign to a close.



Despite being out of the competition, Manipur Tourism had organised for all teams to visit LokTak Lake on the second last day. This is one of Manipurs' Jewels showcasing floating grass islands, fish farms with mountains as a backdrop.

On the last day, the final was between Kenya and the USA. The USA had a great start and were leading the game by 3 goals half way through the second chukker. Kenya made a swift comeback and evened the game by half time. It then became an incredibly close and exciting game. Kenya managed to get one up on USA and win the game 5-4.

"Overall, the tournament was a huge success and it was fantastic to discover and learn about the history of Manipur, experience the ponies, get to know the local players and play at the oldest polo ground in the world! The hospitality was absolutely incredible and the tour was an experience that we will all cherish for a very long time." Billie Mascart.

Manipur Tourism's Manipur Statehood Day Women's Polo Tournament - is a production of Polo Yatra, the women's polo initiative of Huntre! Equine. The tournament is organised by the All Manipur Polo Association. Incredible India! provided the international travel support for this event.