Incredible India

India’s Northeast
... gateway to the east, Paradise unexplored
Madhuri Falls, Arunachal Pradesh
Passage to the North East

Embarking on a journey of India's remote eight states of the North East is a tumultuous but rewarding one. Though the Partition in 1947 was greatly responsible for the region's separation from India, recent years have seen a deep interest in its tourist potential. The infinite variety of its geographic setting, its topography, its varied flora and fauna and avian life, the history of its people and the variety of its ethnic communities and their rich heritage of ancient traditions and lifestyles, its festivals and crafts make it a holiday wonderland that's just begging to be discovered afresh. Discovering the North East states, including the partially opened up Sikkim, in the Eastern Himalayas, is a challenge - yet a romantic adventure in the best traditions of travel and discovery.

Connected by an infinite chain of pearly threads, intricate as a spider's web, the North Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura offer visitors a rare feast - a kaleidoscopic fiesta that lures you with its magical richness and stunning variety. The raw natural beauty, rare orchids and butterflies, brightly painted monasteries, challenging rivers, intricately woven tribal shawls, indigenous sports..... each one has its own special message to the traveller as he passes from one state to another - mesmerized by its dazzling variety and compelling appeal.

Spread over an approximate expanse of 2,65,000 sq km, the region's ecology and the lives of the people here have been shaped by the major rivers of the region, the Brahmaputra and the Barak, the serried ranges of its ancient mountains and the thick tracts of impenetrable jungle and, of course, those months of incessant rain. The population here remains pre-dominantly tribal. But the region was not always so remote.
The traditional dance of the Naga tribes at the Hornbill festival.
For centuries, the passes and valleys of the North Eastern region were the great crossroad of the movement of people, commerce and culture that linked India overland to east and southeast Asia. This great ethno-cultural frontier is a rich complex transition point of racial, religious and linguistic streams.

It is a unique bio-geographic frontier - the meeting point of Indie, Sinic and Malaysian-Burmese strains which have created a fabulous treasure house of faunai, floral and avian bio-diversity.

On the eastern border of Assam, north of the Brahmaputra lie the rich lands of Arunachal Pradesh and its vast network of ancient rivers and streams. It can be accessed from Tezpur and Dibrugarh in Assam. With its lush tea gardens and oil fields, Assam lies flush in the Brahmaputra valley, from the narrow strip of North Bengal. Nowgong is an excellent entry point for Nagaland (on to Kohima via Dimapur), but so is Jorhat. Manipur can be accessed from Dimapur while the hill station of Shillong is a convenient base for exploring Meghalaya. Sikkim can be accessed through the Teesta gorge from Siliguri in West Bengal's Dooars corridor which is integrally linked to the Greater North East.

The North East's amazing diversity makes it a holiday-destination for all seasons. But because of the torrential monsoon ifs best to avoid the period between June-September. October to March are the finest months to explore this diversity at leisure. During peak winter you may have problems crossing the Sela Pass to Tawang, so opt to travel there around mid September-November and March-April. For accommodation, there are plenty of hotels in the big towns to choose from, but you will also find forest resthouses in most places.
Manipur Drummer
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
- Mysterious Magical Mystical

Early riser, Arunachal, the land of the rising sun, is the remotest and one of the loveliest regions, yet most scantily populated states in the entire North East. All this has added to the allure of this mysterious land.

Its very isolation has been a blessing in many ways, having protected it from the ills of over-development and its consequent problems. And it is for this very reason that Arunachal is such a unique holiday destination. Its haunting beauty has a magical charm that lures the visitor to imbibe of its natural beauty, tribal culture, craft traditions and splendid wildlife.

Arunachal shares borderlines with China (Tibet) in the north, Myanmar (Burma) in the east, Bhutan in the west and the states of Nagaland and Assam in the south. Its fertile lands are watered by 5 major rivers, primary amongst them being the River Siang, the mighty Brahmaputra of Assam.

Largest of all the North Eastern states (83,743 sq km), Arunachal is blessed by a delightfully variegated climate - perfect for holidays any time of the year. Almost 80 per cent of the state is under forest cover, which varies from the sub-tropical to the alpine in the upper regions of the northwest, where it is bordered by the Himalayan ranges. This vast canopy of rain-forest with its dynamic blend of an amazing plethora of flora and fauna is one of the world's 17 bio-diversity heritage sites. Its serried peaks, running from north to south, are interspersed with rich valleys in whose hidden folds live her ancient tribes in their picturesque villages.

The first to be kissed by the morning sun, Arunachal is all set to blaze ahead on the tourist trail...
**Recommended Tourist Circuits**

1. Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Tawang
2. Itanagar-Ziro-Daporijo-Along-Pasighat
3. Tinsukhia-Parasuram Kund
4. Miao-Namdapha
5. Dibrugarh Roing-Anini
6. Dibrugarh-Tezu-Hayuliang
7. Pasighat-Yingkiong

**Access**

While the Lohit, Tirap and Dibang valley can be accessed from Dibrugarh (Kolkata-Dibrugarh), it's best to head for Bomdila-Tawang from the Tezpur side, and Itanagar-Ziro-Along-Pasighat from Lilabari (North Lakhimpur) side.

A visit to the state can be divided into four distinct parts: the Bomdila-Sela-Tawang region, Itanagar-Ziro-Along-Pasighat, Roing-Anini and Namdapha-Tezu. To visit the Bomdila side one doesn't have to go to Itanagar. Tezpur is a more convenient starting-point. You can take a direct bus to Tawang. Bus services are also available from Bomdila.

Temperature: In summer, ranges from 25°C to 35°C and in winter, from 1°C to 15°C

**Best Time to Visit:**
From October to May

**Website:**
www.arunachaltourism.com
Dominated by the mighty Brahmaputra River, which has carved out the deep cradle of its birth, Assam is one of the most advanced states in the North East. She is blessed with vast alluvial plains rich in forests and rolling tracts of paddy and tea, and oil from the vast depths of the earth. And though this wayward son of Mother Nature brings havoc in his wake during the monsoons, the Brahmaputra is much revered for the prosperity she brings to the land.

Cocooned between dramatic Himalayan foothills in north and the plateau and hilly terrain of Meghalaya in the south, Assam is one of the highest timber producers of the country. Her tea estates established by the British, produce over half of India's tea. Digboi has India's oldest and Asia's first oil refinery.

The most accessible of the North Eastern states, Assam was ruled for six centuries by the brave Ahoms (of the Shan tribe of Burma) from the 13th century, who successfully repulsed the Mughal invasions. They were also great patrons of the arts. You can still see some of their places, tanks and temples around Sibsagar. International visitors pour into her world-renowned Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the last frontiers for the pre-historic, one-horned rhino. The Project Tiger Reserve Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is a World Heritage Site. Assam is also home to the world's largest inhabited riverine island, Majuli.
**Recommended Tourist Circuits**

1. Guwahati - Phulbari / Jakhalabandha - Kaziranga - Sibsagar
2. Guwahati - Barpeta - Bamma - Manas

**Access**

Guwahati is well connected by air, rail and road with the rest of the country. Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Jorhat, Silchar and Lilabari also have airports. Within the state there are good road and rail links between major towns in the state as well as with those in the adjoining states. This makes Guwahati the best base for your visit to the other states of the North East.

**Temperature**

In summer, varies between 18°C and 35°C, in winter, ranges from 7°C to 26°C

**Best Time to Visit**

From October to May. The torrential monsoon period (from June to September) is best avoided as the swollen Brahmaputra causes havoc in its wake.

**Website:**

www.assamtourism.gov.in
**Majuli Island**

Best approached via Jorhat, Majuli is the world's largest inhabited riverine island. It is also the focal point of Vaishnava culture. Majuli is renowned for its important *satras* (Vaishanava monasteries). For the Assamese, this place is particularly revered as Sankardeva, the 16th century leader of Vaishnava revivalism, established the *satras*. Majuli is home to the **Mishing** tribe who migrated from Arunachal. They are Assam's only riverine tribal community and they make some astoundingly beautiful shawls and blankets which are also used as wall hangings.
Manas National Park

Manas National Park, a project Tiger Reserve and a World Heritage Site, is 176 km north-west of Guwahati. Other denizens of the dense jungles here are the one-horned rhinos, tigers, hispid hare, gours, pygmy hogs and rare golden langurs. It's a paradise for birdwatchers for it has a stunning selection of avian life. Manas also offers excellent angling opportunities. You can stay at the forest bungalow at Mathunguri inside the forest.

Pabitora Sanctuary
If you're short on time you can visit the Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary (close to Guwahati) to see the one-horned rhino.

Orang National Park
With conditions as ideal as Kaziranga, Orang National Park (150 km from Guwahati) its miniature edition, is home to the one-horned rhino.

Nameri National Park
Straddling the lush vistas of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, Nameri National Park is ideal for a leisurely angling vacation. The mahseer of this region is legendary, particularly the golden mahseer. You can also go river rafting. Nameri is also home to the clouded leopard, tiger, Indian bison and capped langur amongst its wild inhabitants.
One of the loveliest, but lesser known holiday destinations in the North East is Manipur. This erstwhile royal state is slowly slipping into mainstream tourism from its sheltered environs amongst the blue-hued hills and is set to be one of the hottest tourist finds in India.

One of the oldest states in the North East, Manipur enjoys its own individual identity with vigorous enthusiasm. This is reflected in the martial arts of Thang-ta and Sarit-Sarak. Its artistic leanings are visible in its graceful Ras Leela dance form and intricate hand-woven shawls. The Meiteis (of Tibeto-Burman provenance) Manipur’s primary populace, inhabit the fertile Imphal valley whose eastern periphery lies in the Chindwin-Irrawaddy basin. In the surrounding hills reside the Nagas in the north and its Kuki-Mizo populace to the south.

This Shangrila of the North East has a galaxy of natural wonders and cultural traditions to be enjoyed at leisure. Home of colourful people and dazzling rituals, myth and legends, lively festivals and an evocative classical dance form, martial arts and indigenous games, Manipur offers visitors a comprehensive diversity of tourist delights. The stunning environs of the Loktak Lake are a wonderful natural and cultural experience. Sundry wars in which the Manipuris played a role are commemorated in the INA museum and war memorials.
Manipur is reputed for its tradition of the arts. Weaving (done by the women) is a time-honoured occupation, fine-tuned to an art form with intricate designs in the dazzling range of sarees, sarongs, shawls, and bedspreads. Each home has a loom. Even the state's martial arts are recognised for their almost poetic traditions. The economic and fluid movements of the spear dance (Ta Khousaroi and sword fight (Thang Yannaba) have a sinuous beauty. This playful, sports-loving community is reputed for its indigenous version of Sagol Kangjei or Polo (it was the first place in India to have evolve this sport of kings), the Mukna Kangjei - (wrestling hockey) and Yubi’Lakpi, a form of rugby played with a greased coconut.

Also known as the land of Radha and Krishna, Manipur, in the best of traditions, has gifted to India's classical dance repertoire her lyrical Ras Leel dance that re-enacts the love story of Radha and Krishna. The Lai Haraoba (Spring Festival) is also celebrated with the Manipuri's graceful movement in all dance forms. Even its expressive tribal folk dances are performed with traditionally aesthetic movements.
Recommended Tourist Circuits

1. Imphal - Moirang - Loktak Lake - Keibul Lamjao National Park and back.
2. Imphal - Ukhrul - Imphal

Access

Imphal, the capital, is connected by air with Delhi and Kolkata. The nearest railhead is Dimapur. Imphal is connected by road with Kohima, Guwahati, Siichar and Shillong.

Temperature

Summer: 14°C to 32°C. Winter: 0°C to 25°C

Best Time to Visit

From October to March. The monsoons are from April to October.

Website:

www.manipurtourism.gov.in
Meghalaya caves
Meghalaya, swaddled amidst wraith-like mists is aptly called the abode of the clouds. It is one of India's prettiest and youngest states (the 21st), having split away from Assam in 1972. Inhabited by the Khasis, Jaintia and Garos\(^\text{1}\) it is best known for the pretty hill station Shillong, which has been Meghalaya's First City for a long time. Christianity has been a compelling force amongst all three. Meghalaya borderlines with Assam and Bangladesh.

Standing out amongst the other states, not just for its traditional and natural beauty, Meghalaya is also known for its unique matrilineal society, which governs lineage and ancestral inheritance through the female line.

With British conquest, Bengalis came in as administrators, the Nepalese served in the military and the Marwaris stepped in as traders. Christian missions were established among the Khasis and in the Garo Hills and Shillong was to become an important educational centre, a summer resort and also a garrison station. It was not just the British who ended up enjoying the benefits of these developments.

For centuries now, Meghalaya's historical strengths have been irreversibly linked with its superlative natural setting. For the discerning holiday-maker, nothing could be more enticing...
Recommended Tourist Circuits

1. Kaziranga-Guwahati-Shillong-
   Cherrapunjee-Shillong
2. Shillong-Mawphlang-Weilloi-
   Mawsynram-Shillong
3. Shillong-Smit-Nartiang-Thadlaskein-
   Jowai-Thlu Umwi-Shillong
4. Guwahati-Dudnai-Bajengdoba-Anoggre-Tura-
   Barengapara-Baghmara-Siju-Balpakram-Shillong

Access

Shillong, the capital, is a good tourist base. There is an airport here. There is another nearby airport at Guwahati. Guwahati is also the nearest railhead. Shillong is connected by road to Guwahati/Darjeeling, Imphal, Kaziranga, Kohima and Kolkata.

Temperature

In summer, ranges from 15°C to 25°C, in winter, it is much colder, with temperature ranging between 4°C and 16°C. The hills are also often covered by fog during this season.

Best Time to Visit

From September to April; avoid the monsoons that drench the state from June to September.

Website:
http://megtourism.gov.in
MIZORAM - Songbird Of The North East

Mizoram, land of the blue mountain, lies in the southernmost outpost of the North Eastern states. Neighbours Manipur, Assam and Tripura bound this tranquil little state, but a part of it slips down between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Evergreen, flush with blooms of exotic flora, its hilly expanses are criss-crossed by gushing rivers and their tributaries and a cobweb of silvery streams.

The forested Mizo hills with their thick bamboo jungles running in north-south direction rise sharply from Cachar Plains in Assam. Highest amongst its several peaks is the Phawngpui - the Blue Mountain. Rice is gown in a few plain areas in the state, such as the Vanlaiphai and the fertile Champhai Plains east of the capital Aizawl, extending to Myanmar.

Oral tradition reveals (there is no known recorded history) that the Mizo people migrating from their homelands in China about 3 centuries ago in search of new pastureland, settled in these remote Mizo hills (Lushai hills). It was absorbed into British rule between 1891-95 and in February 1987, it became the 23rd state of the Indian Union. From the 19th century the Christian missionaries played a dominating role in the state and were greatly responsible for the westernisation of its social life. Today, the state has 87 per cent literacy and gender equality is promoted vigorously.

Clinging to their traditional roots, there has been a concerted effort by the young to propagate their ancient cultural strains. It has also resulted in bringing back to limelight some of the most colourful and joyous aspects of the gentle Mizo culture, which many vacationers have found most appealing...
Recommended Tourist Circuits

Aizawl, and excursions in the areas around.

Access

Aizawl, the capital is within reach of Silchar, which is connected by air to Kolkata. Silchar is also the nearest railhead. Aizawl is connected by mad via Silchar to Guwahati, Imphal, Kohima, Shillong and Agartala. Aizawl is connected by air, thrice a week to Kolkata by Alliance Air.

Temperature

In summer, ranges from 20°C to 30°C, and in winter, from 11°C to 21°C

Best Time to Visit

From October to March.

Website:
https://tourism.mizoram.gov.in
NAGALAND
- Vibrant Traditions

Land of myths and festivals, brave warriors and tribal richness, Nagaland lures the adventurous of heart. Its colourful people, great verdant landscapes and cultural strengths are a delightful combination for a delightful holiday experience. Formally enrolled in as the 16th state of the Indian Union, in 1963, Nagaland shares borders with Assam, Myanmar, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

Three great mountain ranges, running parallel to each other in a jagged line from north to south, comprise the backbone of Nagaland; these are the Patkai, Barail and Naga ranges from which flow numerous rivers of which the most significant are the Dikhu and the Doyang. The rugged mountainous terrain is highest in Saramati in the Tseang district, which is 3840 m above sea level. Japfu Peak. (3014 m) is the highest peak in Kohima district.

The dazzling array of ethnic lifestyles opens up fresh insights into a land that has a prism-like beauty. Each facet is honed to a bright finish that charms as much as it intrigues - as you delve deeper into its culture. Its turbulent history, song and dance, indigenous crafts, costumes and jewellery and myths and legends are an intrinsic part of the warp and weft of its traditions.

The multi-hued tapestry of Nagaland is as colourful as its festivals, as strong and vigorous as its turbulent rivers, as rich and varied as its flora and fauna...
**Recommended Tourist Circuit**


**Access**

There is an airport at Dimapur receiving flights from Delhi and Guwahati. Dimapur is also the nearest railhead. Kohima/ the capital, is connected by road to Dimapur, Imphal, Guwahati, Shillong and Kolkata.

**Temperature**

Summer: Max- 31 °C, Min-16°C. Winter: Max- 24°C, Min- 4°C.

**Best Time to Visit**

The monsoons are from May to September, hence the ideal time to visit is from November to March.

**Website:**

https://www.nagaland.gov.in/portal/portal/StatePortal/AboutNagaland/Tourism
Gleaming like a lost jewel in the folds of the Eastern Himalayas between West Bengal and Nepal, Sikkim is one of India's hottest holiday destinations today. Imbued with history and mysticism, obscured by thick forests and guarded by a cavalcade of holy peaks, the remote state of Sikkim is luring visitors by leaps and bounds recently.

Its dramatic topography - ever-changing..... ever-enduring, is a feast for the senses. Sikkim's vast unspoiled mountain ranges are a trekker's delight and the rivers an unforgettable experience for rafters. Its forest riches include stunning varieties of orchids and rhododendron, bamboo groves and cardamom. Adventure tourism activities are one of its biggest attractions, as more and more new places are opened up for discovery. Standing sentinel over this ancient kingdom is the magnificent and much revered Mt. Khangchendzonga, an intrinsic part of the Sikkimese pantheon, and said to be home of the state's guardian deity.

Bounded by Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet, this "lost horizon" is home to over 4000 species of plants, almost all of them rare. Its great trekking trails leading to hidden lakes and ancient monasteries are the ideal routes to discovery for its vast wealth of natural beauty. An eco-tourism haven, it is still one of the last frontiers of ecological splendour largely untrammelled by the ills of over-development.
Recommended Tourist Circuits


Temperature

Ranges from Min 5.3°C to Max 28°C (average)

Best Time to Visit

From March to May and September to November

Website:
http://www.sikkimtourism.gov.in

Access

Bagdogra is the nearest airport. Gangtok has no air or rail connection to the town. You have to take the train up to New Jalpaiguri and then continue your journey by road. An alternative is to take the daily helicopter service to Gangtok.
The former princely state of Tripura (Hill Tipperah) finds mention in ancient Indian texts such as the Mahabharat and the Ain-I-Akbari and a pillar erected by King Samudragupta, now in Allahabad. The history of this proud kingdom is recorded in the Rajmala, the state chronicle maintained by Brahmin purohits. Ruled once by a series of 183 kings, the kingdom reached its zenith in 1490 under Dhanya Manikya. In time Hill Tipperah was to come in conflict with the Mughal governors of Bengal during the decline of that great empire.

Much of what had been the outer reaches of Tripura, were lost to the British when they took over Bengal. The kingdom of Tripura was eventually absorbed into the Indian Union in 1947.

Tripura has been greatly influenced by Bengal (parts of which were once an integral part of the kingdom) culturally and spiritually; Bengali was the court language. So don't be too surprised if driving along the roads you espy shrines dedicated to Kali, the important deity of Bengal.

The cultural and religious learnings of about twenty different tribal communities, in addition to all this makes Tripura a wonderful amalgam of cross-cultural diversity. Though each ethnic community enjoys its own individual cultural strengths, this melting point is often referred to as a laboratory of exotic cultural synthesis. This tiny state is now emerging slowly into India's tourism arena.
**Recommended Tourist Circuits**

1. Agartala - Sipahijala - Neermahal - Udaipur - Matabari - Pilak - Mahamuni
2. Agartala - Dumboor Lake - Unakoti - Jampui Hills

**Access**

The capital of the state is Agartala; the airport here is served by flights from Kolkata, Guwahati and Silchar. The nearest railway station is Manughat about 120 km away. Agartala is connected by road to major cities in the North Eastern region.

**Temperature**

In summer, ranges from 24°C to 35°C ; in winter, from 13°C to 27°C. The monsoons bring torrential rains from June to August.

**Best Time to Visit**

From September to March.

**Website:**

http://tripuratourism.gov.in
The largest bust relief sculpture of India at Unakoti, North Tripura
INDIA'S NORTH EAST... gateway to the east, Paradise unexplored

Kamakya Devi Temple, Assam

VISA available online.
Please visit: https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa

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