



Northeast Tribal States

Includes »

Assam	553
Guwahati	553
Kaziranga National Park	559
Arunachal Pradesh	564
Nagaland	570
Manipur	573
Mizoram	574
Tripura	576
Meghalaya	579

Best Places to Stay

- » Eco-Camp (p559)
- » Heritage Hotel (p570)
- » Hotel Tripura Castle (p580)
- » Classic Hotel (p574)
- » Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort (p583)

Best Adventures

- » Travel to Shangri La (p567)
- » Search for Paradise (p568)
- » Brahmaputra ferry ride (p567)
- » Encounters with Naga Warriors (p572)
- » Explore rural Mizoram (p576)

Why Go?

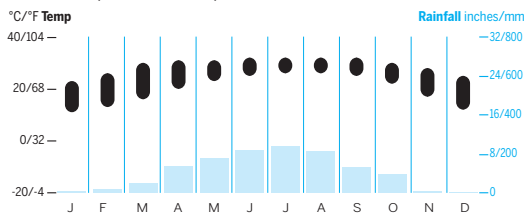
India's Northeast States, dangling way out on the edge of the map and the national perception, are strictly for explorers who want something different from their India experience. These remote frontier lands, where India, Southeast Asia and Tibet meet, are a collision zone of cultures, climates, landscapes and peoples and are one of Asia's last great unknowns. It's a place of rugged beauty where uncharted forests clamber up toward unnamed Himalayan peaks. It's a land of enormous variety where rhinoceros live in swampy grasslands and former head-hunters live in longhouses in the jungle. And it's an adventure in the truest sense of the word.

Infuriating permits and over-exaggerated safety worries mean the northeast is way off the tourist trail, yet the people are probably the friendliest in India.

So with all this on offer, why wait? Don your pith helmet and set forth in search of adventure.

When to Go

Assam (Guwahati)



Mar The wildlife is at its most visible in Kaziranga and other national parks.

Oct The Himalayan vistas are perfect and the roads to Tawang and Mechuka remain snow-free.

Dec Fierce Naga warriors descend on Kohima for the Hornbill festival (December 1–7).

Food

The food in the northeast is as varied and exotic as the people and the terrain. Sure, you can get all the North Indian and Chinese staples in most places, but if travel is all about new experiences then Northeast India is going to be a culinary adventure you'll never forget. Things start off tame enough in high mountain areas like Tawang, where the food is reminiscent of neighbouring Tibet – delicious *momos* and less-delicious Tibetan tea are all the rage. Head east and things become more interesting. Barbecued rat, forest antelope and something we couldn't quite identify were on the menu in central Arunachal Pradesh. If you're going to Mizoram, don't take Rover – dog meat is a delicacy there. In Nagaland, grubs, maggots, snakes, hornets and giant spiders all get taste buds excited.

DON'T MISS

There aren't all that many places left in the world where the maps may as well have blank spaces on them, snow-capped mountains remain unnamed and unclimbed, forests are filled with creatures that scientists have yet to lay eyes upon and hill tops are crowned with unmolested tribal villages, but northeast India is one such place. As the region slowly opens up, don't miss this opportunity for genuine, undiluted adventure. Areas that are safe yet largely unexplored by tourists include almost all of rural **Mizoram**, large tracts of **Tripura** (check the security situation first), the furthest reaches of **Nagaland** and, best of all, huge chunks of steamy forests, alpine meadows and high Himalayan wildernesses have finally started opening up in **Arunachal Pradesh**.

Top Festivals

- » Torgya and Losar (Jan/Feb, Tawang, p569) Masked Tibetan Buddhist dances.
- » Ambubachi Mela (Jun, Kamakhya Mandir, Guwahati, p554) Tantric rituals and animal sacrifices.
- » Nongkrem (Oct, Smit, p582) Khasi royal festival.
- » Wangala (Oct/Nov, Meghalaya statewide, p579) Harvest festival with impressive dancing.
- » Ras Mahotsav Festival (3rd week of Nov, Majuli Island, p562) Major Vishnu festival.
- » Hornbill Festival (Dec 1-7, Kohima, p571) Naga tribes in full warrior gear.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Guwahati airport has flights to most major Indian cities. It's also the only big city in the northeast with a train line connecting it to the rest of India.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 44.99 million
- » Area: 255,083 sq km
- » Main languages: Assamese, Bodo, Hindi, Nagamese, Manipuri, Mizo, Khasi, Garo, Bengali
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹800, \$\$ ₹800 to ₹2500, \$\$\$ above ₹2500

Top Tip

If you're using a tour company, allow at least one month to obtain travel permits and two months if travelling in a group of less than four (and you're not a married couple). If applying independently allow at least two to three months.

Resources

- » www.assamtourism.org
- » www.arunachaltourism.com
- » www.tourismnagaland.com
- » <http://manipur.nic.in/tourism.htm>
- » www.mizotourism.nic.in
- » www.tripuratourism.in
- » www.megtourism.gov.in