



Bihar & Jharkhand

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Best Places to Eat

- Bellpepper Restaurant (p520)
- Tandoor Hut (p520)
- To Kiy Restaurant (p528)
- Siam Thai (p528)

Best Places to Stay

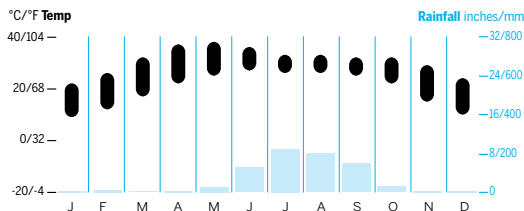
- Indo Hokke Hotel (p530)
- Chanakya BNR Hotel (p532)
- Taj Darbar (p527)
- Hotel Windsor (p520)
- Bodhgaya Regency (p527)

Why Go?

The landlocked states of Bihar and Jharkhand promise an eclectic mix of attractions cherry-picked from India's vast artistic and natural heritage. Spirituality is a huge draw here: Bihar is the birthplace of Buddhism and plays host to countless pilgrims who flock to its many places of religious significance. Parasnath Hill, Jharkhand's highest point, is the most significant Jain pilgrimage site in north-central India. The city of Patna commands academic respect as one of ancient India's greatest power centres, in addition to housing some curious monuments from the British Raj era. On the other hand, wallowing far off the beaten track, the remote hills and forests of Jharkhand are a nature lover's paradise, where one can spy on myriad animal and bird species, including the elephants and tigers. All in all, this is a very different kind of experience compared to holidays in more touristy states, so come with an open mind and a sense of adventure.

When to Go

Patna



Jan & Feb
Temperatures hover between a chilly-to-pleasant 12°C and 25°C.

Oct & Nov The region's forests assume a moody autumn look as winter sets in.

Nov & Dec Bihar's Sonapur Mela puts Pushkar's Camel Fair to shame.

Food

Bihar and Jharkhand are lands of robust, rustic culinary flavours. In Bihar, look out for the ubiquitous *litti*, balls of spiced chickpea flour covered in dough and baked on coals, which are served with *chokha*, a spicy mashed potato gravy seasoned with local five-spice. Jharkhand's answer to *litti* is *dhuska*, rice-flour pancakes deep fried in oil and served with a potato and gram curry. A string of upmarket restaurants in Patna and Ranchi specialise in the best of traditional Mughlai and Afghani cuisine, mostly of the meaty kebab kind. Eateries in Bodhgaya bring together a smattering of flavours from around the world, including Japanese, Thai and Continental. Sweet teeth in Bihar and Jharkhand are satiated with dry sweets, like the strange but satisfying *tilkut*, pounded sesame-seed cookies made with jaggery batter or melted sugar.

DON'T MISS

The **Mahabodhi Temple** in Bodhgaya was where Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment beneath a bodhi tree and became Buddha. The temple complex was declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2002, and is visited daily by thousands of pilgrims, predominantly from India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, China and Japan. It's a supernova of ritualistic splendour and is not to be missed. Other treats in the region include the Jain Holy Ground at **Parasnath Hill**, the elephant-rich **Betla National Park** and the ancient ruins in and around **Rajgir**.

Top State Festivals

- ➔ **Pataliputra Mahotsava** (☀️ Mar; Patna, p519) Patna's historic past is celebrated with parades, sports, dancing and music.
- ➔ **Rajgir Mahotsava** (☀️ Oct; Rajgir, p529) A performing arts gala with dances, devotional songs and instrumental music.
- ➔ **Chhath Festival** (☀️ Oct/Nov; Bihar & Jharkhand, p531) People perform spectacular rituals on the banks of rivers and water bodies to honour Surya, the sun god.
- ➔ **Sonepur Mela** (☀️ Nov/Dec; Sonepur, p522) With 700,000 attendees and countless thousands of animals taking part, this three-week festival is four times the size of Pushkar's Camel Fair.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Most travellers arrive at Patna's Jaiprakash Narayan International Airport, Ranchi's Birsa Munda Airport or by train into Patna (PNBE) or Ranchi junctions (RNC).

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population:** 103.8 million (Bihar), 32.9 million (Jharkhand)
- ➔ **Area:** 99,200 sq km (Bihar), 74,677 sq km (Jharkhand)
- ➔ **Capital:** Patna (Bihar), Ranchi (Jharkhand)
- ➔ **Language:** Hindi, English
- ➔ **Sleeping prices:** \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹2500, \$\$\$ above ₹2500

Top Tip

Steer clear of this region during monsoon season (June to September) – Bihar is the country's most flood-prone state.

Resources

- ➔ **Bihar Tourism** (www.bihartourism.gov.in) The official department of tourism site of Bihar.
- ➔ **Jharkhand Tourism** (www.jharkhandtourism.in) The official department of tourism site of Jharkhand.