



Northeast States

Includes →

Assam	559
Guwahati.....	561
Tezpur	566
Kaziranga National Park	567
Arunachal Pradesh	572
Nagaland.....	578
Manipur.....	581
Mizoram	583
Tripura.....	584
Meghalaya.....	587
Shillong	587
Cherrapunjee (Sohra).....	590

Best Places to Stay

- Diphlu River Lodge (p568)
- Ri Kynjai (p589)
- Razhu Pru (p579)
- Baruah Bhavan (p563)
- Classic Hotel (p582)

Best Adventures

- Kaziranga elephant safari (p567)
- Rafting the Siang (p576)
- Exploring Naga villages in Mon (p581)
- Trekking in Cherrapunjee (p590)

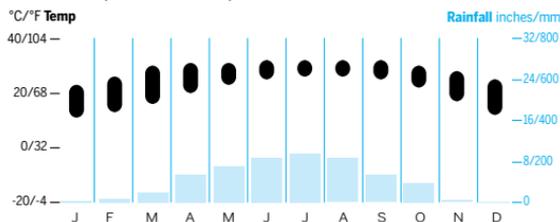
Why Go?

Teetering on the farthest brink of India's map, popular perception and prime-time TV, the Northeast States are one of Asia's last great unknowns. Sharing borders with Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar and Bangladesh, these remote frontiers are a collision zone of tribal cultures, climates, landscapes and peoples. A region of rugged beauty, it's a wonderland where glacial rivers flow through plunging Himalayan gorges, faith moves mountains on perilous pilgrimages to Tawang and Pemako, rhinoceros graze in Kaziranga's swampy grasslands and former head-hunters slowly awake from opium-induced dreams to embrace modernity in their primordial longhouses in Nagaland.

Of course, it's not all smooth sailing in these faraway states, and you have a horde of everyday obstacles (bad roads, poor infrastructure and social unrest, to name a few) to battle along the way. Needless to say, only those with a taste for raw adventure would return from here feeling truly rewarded.

When to Go

Assam (Guwahati)



Mar The best season for rhino spotting in Kaziranga.

Oct Best for dazzling Himalayan vistas and trips to remote outposts such as Tawang and Mechuka.

Dec Fierce Naga warriors in ethnic regalia assemble for Kohima's Hornbill festival.

Food

Good news for gastronomes: the food in the Northeast is as varied and exotic as its cultures and terrains. Start your culinary journey in Guwahati with a helping of fish *tenga* (sour curry), a subtly flavoured Assamese speciality, before hitting Tawang's highlands, where Tibetan staples such as *momos*, fermented cheese chutney and salted yak butter tea are all the rage. For a change of palate, head to eastern Arunachal Pradesh, where barbecued rats and sun-dried fish feature boldly on menus. Dollops of fermented (and super pungent!) bamboo shoot liven up fiery servings of stewed pork in Nagaland, while complementing a range of exotic delicacies including maggots, silkworms and – wait for it – dog meat. If you fancy fish and soyabean in their fermented, piquant avatars, Manipur is the place for you. And finally, for those with less-adventurous taste buds, there's always some generic pan-Indian fare to be found along the way.

DON'T MISS

Being one of the last few sanctuaries in the world where maps still have blank spaces on them, Northeast India offers travellers a priceless opportunity to explore virgin forests filled with unnamed creatures or hike through rolling mountainscapes dotted with unmolested tribal villages. Areas that are safe yet largely unexplored include most of rural **Mizoram**, far eastern **Nagaland** and, best of all, ageless forests, gushing rivers and alpine meadows in **Arunachal Pradesh**.

Top Festivals

- ➔ **Losar** (☺ Jan/Feb; Tawang, p577) Masked Tibetan Buddhist dances.
- ➔ **Rongali Bihu** (☺ mid-Apr, statewide) Assamese New Year festivities featuring good food, dance and merriment.
- ➔ **Ambubachi Mela** (☺ Jun; Kamakhya Mandir, Guwahati, (p561) A melange of tantric fertility rituals.
- ➔ **Wangala** (☺ Oct/Nov; Tura, p587) Garo harvest festival with dance and drum rolls.
- ➔ **Ras Mahotsav** (☺ Nov; Majuli Island, p569) Hindu festival marked by traditional dance performances.
- ➔ **Hornbill Festival** (☺ 1-7 Dec; Kohima, p580) Naga tribes take the stage in full warrior gear.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

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

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population:** 44.98 million
- ➔ **Area:** 255,083 sq km
- ➔ **Main languages:** Assamese, Hindi, Nagamese, English, Manipuri, Mizo, Khasi, Garo, Bengali
- ➔ **Sleeping prices:** \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹2500, \$\$\$ above ₹2500

Top Tip

Check weather forecasts, road conditions, security issues and availability of transport and accommodation in advance, especially for remote places. Things can change at short notice; stay clued in to the latest situation on the ground.

Resources

- ➔ **Assam Tourism** (www.assamtourism.org)
- ➔ **Arunachal Tourism** (www.arunachaltourism.com)
- ➔ **Nagaland Tourism** (www.tourismnagaland.com)
- ➔ **Tourism in Manipur** (www.manipur.nic.in/tourism.htm)
- ➔ **Dept of Tourism** (www.tourism.mizoram.gov.in)
- ➔ **Tripura Tourism** (www.tripuratourism.nic.in)
- ➔ **Dept of Tourism, Government of Meghalaya** (www.meghtourism.gov.in)