



Odisha

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Best Far-Flung Sleeps

- ➔ Gajlaxmi Palace (p600)
- ➔ Chandoori Sai (p617)
- ➔ Nature Camp Bhitarkanika (p618)
- ➔ Roopark Village (p618)
- ➔ Nature Camp Chhotkei (p604)

Best Places to Eat

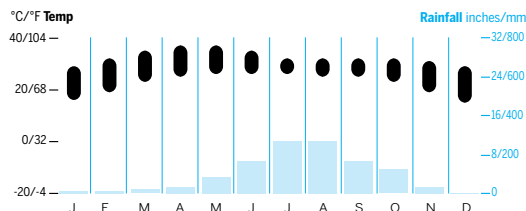
- ➔ Kanika (p601)
- ➔ Odisha Hotel (p600)
- ➔ Tangerine 9 (p601)
- ➔ Chung Wah (p609)
- ➔ Nature Camp Bhitarkanika (p618)

Why Go?

Though travellers are waking up to Odisha's (Orissa) intricate patchwork of culture, tradition, sun and sand, it continues content as relatively undiscovered. For those that go, Odisha affords an escape from the frenzy of other Indian traveller epicentres and boasts the World Heritage-listed Sun Temple in Konark, bursting with brilliantly worked scenes of Odisha life. Medieval temples pepper the streets of the capital, Bhubaneswar. Wonderful national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are crammed with tigers, elephants, Irrawaddy dolphins, monster crocodiles and millions of migratory birds. Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish lagoon, is flanked by inexpensive seaside retreats along one of India's prettiest coasts. Inland, the Adivasis (tribal people) live precariously on the edge of mainstream society, yet retain their colourful, fascinating traditions – a metaphor for Odisha itself.

When to Go

Bhubneswar



Nov–Mar Warm and dry, just like fresh laundry from the dhobi-wallah.

June/July It's baking, but Puri's Rath Yatra Festival is Odisha's biggest party.

Dec The Unesco-betrothed Sun Temple is the backdrop for the seductive Konark Festival.

Food

Mustard is the staple in Odishan kitchens, used ubiquitously in seed, paste and oil forms, giving many Odisha dishes a distinct pungent flavour. A typical meal consists of *bhata* (rice) served alongside a variety of tasty side dishes such as *kaharu phula bhaja* (fried pumpkin flower); *dalma* (dahl cooked with pumpkin, potato, plantains and eggplant, then fried in a five-spice oil of fenugreek, cumin, black cumin, anise and mustard, topped with grated coconut); and *be-sara* (vegetables or river fish with mustard-paste gravy). *Saga bhaja*, leafy greens lightly fried with garlic paste and a five-seed mixture called *pancha phutan* (cumin, mustard, anise, black cumin and chilli), is also a treat here. On the coast, fish and prawns are omnipresent: *sarison macha* is a superb favourite fish dish cooked in a mustard-based curry.

DON'T MISS

Odisha's masterstroke is undeniably its 13th-century **Sun Temple** at Konark; one of the state's most unforgettable journeys is a tour through the **South-western tribal regions**, where colour and culture collide in the fascinating villages and markets of some 62 tribal (Adivasi) societies.

Top State Festivals

- ➔ **Adivasi Mela** (☀ Jan, Bhubaneswar, p595) Features art, dance and handicrafts of Odisha's tribal groups.
- ➔ **Rath Yatra** (☀ Jun/Jul, Puri, p605) Immense chariots containing Lord Jagannath, brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra are hauled from Jagannath Temple to Gundicha Mandir.
- ➔ **Puri Beach Festival** (☀ late Nov, Puri, p605) Song, dance, food and cultural activities on the beach.
- ➔ **Konark Festival** (☀ Dec, Konark, p610) Features traditional music and dance and a seductive temple ritual.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Most travellers usually arrive at Bhubaneswar's Biju Patnaik Airport or by the rails into Bhubaneswar or Puri junctions.

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population:** 42 million
- ➔ **Area:** 155,707 sq km
- ➔ **Capital:** Bhubaneswar
- ➔ **Main language:** Odia
- ➔ **Sleeping prices:** \$ below ₹1200, \$\$ ₹1200 to ₹3500, \$\$\$ above ₹3500

Top Tip

Permission from the District Collector is needed to visit sensitive tribal areas. Give yourself at least 10 days for this process to play itself out.

Resources

- ➔ **Visit Odisha** (www.orissatourism.gov.in) Official Department of Tourism site.