



Bihar & Jharkhand

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Why Go?

Glistening paddy-fields to the north and wild forested hills to the south provide a striking backdrop for a visit to this remote rural region. This is also one of the country's religious melting pots, and getting caught up in the spiritual atmosphere is the real draw for travellers.

Bihar is the birthplace of Buddhism and plays host to thousands of pilgrims from around the world who throng its many places of religious significance; the most extraordinary of which is traveller-friendly Bodhgaya, where Buddha achieved enlightenment. In tribal Jharkhand, holy Parasnath Hill is a revered Jain pilgrimage site, and joining devotees on the hike to the top is a surreal highlight for those who like to get off the beaten track.

Truth be told, the whole of this region is off the beaten track. Outside Bodhgaya, foreign tourists are almost nonexistent, so if you're looking to sidestep mainstream travel, this unfashionable pocket could be an unexpected highlight.

Best for Spiritual Atmosphere

- ➔ Bodhgaya (p529)
- ➔ Parasnath Hill (p537)
- ➔ Rajgir (p533)

Best Off the Beaten Track

- ➔ Parasnath Hill (p537)
- ➔ Betla (Palamau) National Park (p538)
- ➔ Vaishali (p526)
- ➔ Kesariya (p531)
- ➔ Motihari (p528)

When to Go

Patna

°C/°F Temp

40/104 —

20/68 —

0/32 —

-20/-4 —

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Rainfall inches/mm

—32/800

—24/600

—16/400

—8/200

—0

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

Jun–Sep Monsoon season. Steer clear – Bihar is India's most flood-prone state.

Oct & Nov Comfortably cool again; the region's forests assume a moody autumn look.



Bihar & Jharkhand Highlights

- 1 Witnessing Buddhists from around the world converging on the powerfully serene Mahabodhi Temple in the traveller haven of **Bodhgaya** (p529)
- 2 Getting up at 3am for the surreal Jain pilgrimage to the top of **Parasnath Hill** (p537)
- 3 Visiting the peaceful ruins of the once-huge ancient university at **Nalanda** (p535)
- 4 Hiring a tonga (horse-drawn carriage) for the day to explore the temples and stupas in laidback **Rajgir** (p533), before bathing with Hindu devotees at the revered hot springs
- 5 Prowling the forests of remote **Betla (Palamau) National Park** (p538) on the back of an elephant
- 6 Walking through northern Bihar villages to the Buddhist ruins at **Vaishali** (p526)