



Odisha

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Best off the Beaten Track

- Koraput (p619)
- Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary (p623)
- Pusphagiri Ruins (p623)
- Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary (p608)

Best Rural Retreats

- Gajlaxmi Palace (p606)
- Nature Camp Bhitarkanika (p624)
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- Nature Camp Tikarpada (p608)
- Toshali Ratnagiri Resort (p623)

Why Go?

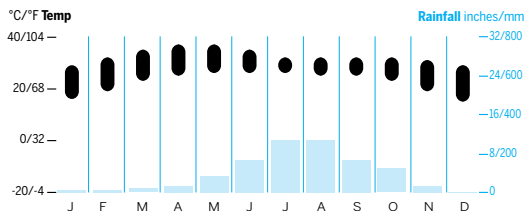
Odisha (Orissa) slipped off the tourist radar once Puri's hippy-hangout days began to fade, but it's beginning to re-establish itself as an off-the-beaten-track favourite for more adventurous types. Those who make the effort are rewarded with an intricate patchwork of history, culture and natural beauty, along with a sprinkling of sun and sand.

The forested hills of the southwest (and overly officious bureaucracy) keep Adivasi (tribal) groups hidden from mainstream tourism, but it is still possible to visit their fascinating weekly markets. Forests elsewhere – both inland and along the coast – are home to some of Odisha's intriguing nature reserves – 6m-long crocodiles, anyone?

Foodies will relish a whole new set of regional flavours cooked up in Odishan kitchens, while history buffs will be left salivating over long-lost Buddhist universities, ancient Jain rock carvings and centuries-old Hindu relics, including Konark's unparalleled Sun Temple.

When to Go

Bhubneswar



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

Jun & Jul It's baking, but Puri's Rath Yatra festival is Odisha's biggest celebration.

Dec Sun Temple is the magnificent backdrop for the seductive Konark Festival.



Odisha Highlights

- 1 Marvelling at the artistic magnificence of Konark's 800-year-old Unesco-protected **Sun Temple** (p615)
- 2 Venturing deep into the hills around **Koraput** (p619) to visit one of the region's fascinating tribal markets
- 3 Cruising past enormous estuarine crocodiles in the

rarely visited mangrove swamps of **Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary** (p623)

- 4 Touring some of the 50-odd ancient temples that still remain in Odisha's full-of-surprises capital city, **Bhubaneswar** (p600)
- 5 Tapping into what's left of the traveller vibe in the one-

time hippy hangout of **Puri** (p610)

- 6 Spotting rare Irrawaddy dolphins at **Chilika Lake** (p615)
- 7 Stepping out of your tent and gaze across the sands of the Mahanadi River in breathtaking **Satkosia Sanctuary** (p608)