



Bihar & Jharkhand

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Mohammad Restaurant (p528)
- ➔ Be Happy Cafe (p528)
- ➔ Pind Balluchi (p520)
- ➔ Nook (p533)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Rahul Guest House (p527)
- ➔ Hotel Nalanda Regency (p530)
- ➔ Chanakya BNR Hotel (p533)
- ➔ Hotel President (p519)

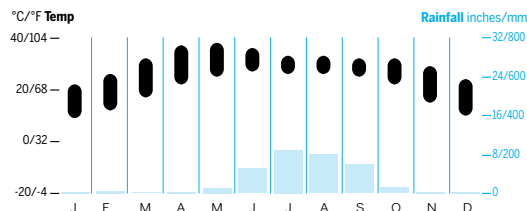
Why Go?

Remote and rural, Bihar is the birthplace of Buddhism – indeed its very name derives from *vihara*, the Sanskrit word for Buddhist monastery. Thousands of pilgrims from around the world throng its many places of religious significance, most extraordinary of which is Bodhgaya, the site of Buddha's enlightenment, where getting caught up in the spiritual atmosphere is a major draw for travellers. 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, and especially if you have an interest in Buddhism, this unfashionable pocket of India could be an unexpected highlight.

When to Go

Patna



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 Warm days in October and comfortably cool in November.



Bihar & Jharkhand Highlights

- 1 Bodhgaya (p525)**
Witnessing Buddhists from around the world praying, prostrating and meditating at the powerfully serene site of Buddha's enlightenment.
- 2 Parasnath Hill (p532)**
Getting up at 4am for the surreal day-long Jain

- pilgrimage to the top of Jharkhand's tallest peak.
- 3 Nalanda (p531)** Visiting the peaceful ruins of this once-huge ancient university.
- 4 Rajgir (p529)** Hiring a tonga (two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage) for the day to explore the Buddhist sites and stupas of this laid-back village.

- 5 Betla (Palamau) National Park (p533)**
Touring the deliciously peaceful forests of this protected area to spot wild elephants and spotted deer.
- 6 Vaishali (p522)** Walking through villages to the ancient stupas and ruins of this Buddhist pilgrimage spot.