

EASTERN ARUNACHAL PRADESH & ASSAM

12 Nights/ 13 Days

Best Travel Period: Mid October to Mid May

P U R V I D I S C O V E R Y . C O M

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the dawn lit mountains of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Enjoy the exhilarating experience of walking on a community made hanging bridge.
- Tour through the lush tea estates of Upper Assam. Learn how different varieties of tea are processed in surrounding plantations.
- Experience a tea tasting session with a professional planter.
- Live in colonial splendour.
- Visit Mukul Organic Tea Plantation.
- Enjoy a local dance performance.
- Visit Majuli – the largest inhabited river island in the world.
- Visit Kaziranga National Park – home to the Great Indian One Horned Rhinoceros.
- Visit the famous Kamakhya Temple.
- Visit the largest silk village- Sualkuchi.

DAY 01- DIBRUGARH

On arrival at Dibrugarh airport received and transferred to Mancotta/Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow. Afternoon take a tea walk in Mancotta Tea Estate. Evening enjoy a dance performance by an ethnic dance group on the bungalow lawns of Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow. Overnight at Mancotta/Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow.



Dibrugarh is the gateway to the “Hidden Land” of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Myanmar. The Ahoms from Thailand came through Northern Myanmar to this area in the 13th century to establish their Empire which thrived in the ancient land of Assam. It is the “Camellia” town of Upper Assam, an undisturbed haven, with its rich tea gardens resembling a lush green carpet. Experience and enjoy the richness of these tea gardens while staying at the Heritage Chang Bungalows. These are constructed on stilts and are situated in a serene atmosphere free from pollution.

When the British established their tea plantations in the mid-19th century they quickly built comfortable bungalows designed to make life as pleasant as possible in what, was to them, a hostile and strange land.

One of the main features of these buildings has given rise to their name – CHANG BUNGALOWS. Chang in the local language means “raised on stilts” and the design served multi purposes- to keep the house cool by allowing the breeze to blow underneath and to keep both water and animals out!



Bihu is the most popular folk dance of Assam. The people of Assam are very proud of its unique position among all other such dances of India. Except Bhangra (the popular folk dance of Punjab), no other folk dance in India can compete with the rhythmic exuberance of the Bihu dance. ‘Bihu’ performed by young men and women reflects youthful passion and joy rejuvenating life during the spring season, accompanied by songs woven around the theme of love and physical yearning. The dance is performed by all irrespective of caste, creed and religion.



DAY 02: TEA TOUR

Today we visit Ethelwold Tea Estate, Mancotta Tea Estate and Mukul Organic Tea Plantation to know all about CTC & Orthodox tea. Also experience of a Tea tasting session of different types of tea with one of the knowledgeable person in the field of tea/ practicing Estate Manager.

A Tea Tour through old heritage tea garden gives an insight into the different activities that vary from season to season. It teaches us all about tea- its origin, how it is grown, tea tasting and its quality. During the winter months the dormant bushes are pruned to ensure vigorous growth during the warmer months. Once the rains begin, and the temperature rises, the gardens come alive with teams of colourfully dressed tea pluckers, predominantly ladies as they are said to be better able to pluck the delicate buds and leaves. The harvest, which goes on continuously from March to November, is taken everyday to the factory where it undergoes an age old process of being turned into the finished product. All stages of the process are

carefully controlled to ensure that the tea that leaves the factory is only of the highest quality, a quality that has made Assam tea world famous.

Note:

Visit to tea factory is subject to being operational on the day of the visit. There is no tea plucking between December till mid March and hence the actual manufacturing process of tea cannot be demonstrated when one visits the factory during this period. Factory also remains closed on Monday's of the week.

DAY 03: DIBRUGARH- NAMPHAKE-MAGURI BEEL- DIBRUGARH.

Post breakfast drive to Naharkatiya (60 kms/01 ½ hrs) and visit Namphake Village, inhabited by the Tai Phakial people. Visit the Buddhist Monastery at the village and also interact with the local people to know more about their rich tradition and culture. Later drive to Tinsukia (01 hr) and take a boat ride at Maguri Beel on a country boat to see some birdlife. Evening drive back to Dibrugarh (01 ½ hrs) and overnight at Mancotta/Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow.

Namphake Village is the largest of the Tai-Phake villages in Assam, boasting 70 odd families, which trace their ancestry to the great Tai race. The village folk speak a dialect similar to the language in Thailand and still follow the traditional customs and dress code of the great Tai race. The hamlet is also home to the Namphake Buddhist Monastery, one of the oldest and most respected Buddhist Monasteries in Assam. They are Buddhist in religion. They have their own separate scripts and has also preserved in a few manuscripts, which are mainly religious scriptures. These manuscripts are written in Tai-scripts, which are preserved in their village Vihars.



Tinsukia - The ancient name of Tinsukia was Bangmara and was also originally known as Changmai Pathar. It was the capital of the Muttack Kingdom. Bangmara city was built by King Sarbananda Singha with the help of his Minister Gopinath Barbaruah alias Godha. The city was built originally in the middle of where the present Tinsukia city is situated (near Senairam H.S. School). As legend goes- Sarbananda Singha, asked Godha Baruah to dig a triangular shaped pond in Bangmara which is now known as “Tinikunia Pukhuri”. In 1884 a Dibru-Sadiya Rail line was constructed, and a station was setup near “Tinikunia Phukhuri” - this was subsequently christened Tinsukia. Since then the city is known as Tinsukia.

Maguri-Motapung Beel - is in Tinsukia District of Assam. It is a wetland complex which is part of Dibru Saikhowa , and is located just outside the Dibru Saikhowa National Park and Biosphere Reserve. Maguri-Motapung Beel is located in the southern bank of the Dibru River, ‘Beel’ is the local name for a lake with marshy areas around it’s edges. The Beel is connected to the Dibru River by a system of channels and is very rich in aquatic life especially waterfowl and grassland birds. Best time to visit is November to March.



DAY 04 - DIBRUGARH-PASIGHAT, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Today we drive to Pasighat (03 hrs) -the home of the Adis, who are remembered for their colorful costumes. Enroute we drive by **India's longest rail cum road bridge - The Bogibeel Bridge** built over the mighty Brahmaputra River. On arrival check in at Abor Country River Camp for 02 nights located on the banks of the Siang River that flows quietly through Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh, and in the middle of the tropical forest; this is a retreat into the lap of nature. Later in the afternoon visit Adi tribal village. Overnight at the camp.



DAY 05 - PASIGHAT-DAMRO-PASIGHAT, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Today we take a day excursion to Damro. We drive early morning (03 hrs) and later hike from the longest hanging bridge in Arunachal Pradesh and visit Adi Padam Tribal village to learn about their unique Donyi-Polo culture. Later in the afternoon we drive back to Pasighat from overnight.



Built from traditional cane and bamboo, the bridge hangs across the Yamne River. Using canes and wires, it is held between suspension cables with a walkway made of halved bamboos for paneling used as protection. The use of these materials is also the mark of the local tribal culture. This 1000 ft. long suspension bridge is used by the tribal's to reach the other end of the bridge for their daily activities and livelihood.

DAY 06 - PASIGHAT-ROING-TINSUKIA, ASSAM

Today after breakfast drive to Roing, Arunachal Pradesh (02 ½ - 03 hrs). At Roing visit the local villages inhabited by the Idu Mishmi tribal people. Interact with the villagers to know more about their rich tradition and culture. Later continue drive to Tinsukia (02 ½ - 03 hrs). Enroute drive by the India's longest river bridge - Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Setu also known as the Dhola Sadiya Bridge. On arrival check in at Wathai Heritage Bungalow, Limbuguri TE for 02 nights.



Roing rises from the Himalayan foothills to the middle ranges with the highest point of Mayodia at a height of 2655 meters from mean sea level. Snow-capped peaks, turbulent rivers, mystic valleys and abundance of rich flora & fauna are a few attractions of the district. The district is well known for its largest cover of thick green forest with almost 80% of the area being notified as reserved forest, wild life sanctuaries or unclassified state forests. Idu Mishmi is the major tribe inhabiting this area along with the Adi Padam tribe in the lower plain areas. The **Idu Mishmi tribe** is also known as Chulikatas (due to their traditional cropped hair). They build their thatched roof houses on the slant of the hills or in the forest. Their main festival is Reh. Their dress is remarkable for the wealth and beauty of its design. Most of it is made by them from wood, partly from cotton and sometimes from nettle fibre. They also wear thick coats of black with white pattern made of nettle fibre and human hair.

The abundance of natural beauty, colorful and charming tribes, ancient archeological sites make the place a perfect destination for nature lovers, adventurous tourists, archeologists and anthropologists. Steal yourself away to Wathai heritage bungalow, Limbuguri tea estate- this newly added boutique plantation bungalow will allow you to rejuvenate your senses. As it defines serenity, you will most certainly leave feeling revitalized. It is the idea base whether on a request for quietude or seeking refuge whist on an explorative ornithological tour to the neighbouring Dibru saikhowa national park. Freshly brewed tea from the plantations can be enjoyed in the veranda to the front of the bungalow, while meals are served in the spacious dining room complete with an original fireplace.

DAY 07 -TINSUKIA-WAKRO-TINSUKIA, ASSAM

Today take a full day excursion to Wakro, Arunachal Pradesh (02 ½ hrs- 03 hrs). Enroute visit Empong Village inhabited by the Khampti tribes and also visit the Golden Pagoda at Chowkham. At Wakro visit the local villages inhabited by the Mishmi Tribe. In the afternoon drive back to Tinsukia and overnight at the Bungalow.

Khampti Tribal Village at Empong, Chowkham: Empong village near Chowkham (29 kms from Wakro) is a beautiful village enriched by the swiftly flowing Tengapai rivulet and surrounded by lush paddy fields. Tai Khamptis are a sub group of the Shan race of Sagaing Division in northwestern Burma who migrated to India in the 18th century- hence the Khampti possess East Asian features. They are followers

of Theravada Buddhism and have adopted the script of Shan origin, known as Lik-Tai. Their houses are built on raised stilts with thatched roof. Wooden planks are used for their flooring and split bamboo for the walls.

Golden Pagoda at Chowkham is a beautiful Buddhist Pagoda well located near Tengapani river foot bridge. Close to it one can also see a Buddhist Vihara (Temple) with an image of the Sleeping Buddha.

Wakro (maximum valley altitude 2000m) is the homeland of the "Mishmis" one of the Mongoloid tribes of Tibeto-Burman origin. They speak their own dialect which varies from different groups. The three major Mishmi groups are "Idus" "Tarons" and the 'Kamans'. Mishmis are very rich in culture and may be termed as a festival loving people. They believe any day of the year is auspicious for a ceremony if provisions exist. On these days animals are sacrificed. Mishmis are nature worshipers.



Mishmi are the inhabitants of Lohit Districts and the border area of adjoining district. Mishmis are animist and believe in a number of higher spiritual beings. Kabeya, or Pharai in their traditional village council who exercise the judgment of any disputes comes to their society. The Mishmi society is divided into numbers of sub-tribes such as Idu-Mishmis, Digaru Mishmi, Miju Mishmi with more or less distinctive characters on its dresses among themselves. This tribe can be easily distinguished from other by their typical hairstyle.

Their dresses reflect the artistic taste and the cultural thinking of the society. The male dress of Miju and Digaru consist of a sleeveless black or maroon coloured cloth with ornamental borders and waist cloth with a embroidered flag in the front. They wear a head dress of woven cane. The women wear black skirts with coloured stripes reaching above the ankle and a beautiful embroidered bodice and a shawl. They also wear beautiful ornaments made of silver. The women keep themselves busy in weaving. The men are involved in making cane and bamboo products. The puffing of opium with the help of silver or wooden pipes by both men and women is the part and parcel of their tradition. These people may be termed as festive tribe. Reh is the most important festivals celebrated by Idu-Mishmis during 1st week of February.

DAY 08 - TINSUKIA-SIVASAGAR-MAJULI, ASSAM

Today post breakfast we drive to Jorhat (180 kms / 04 ½ -05 hrs). En-route we visit the Ahom monuments and temples at Sivasagar which encompass the 600 year old history of the Ahom Dynasty. Later post lunch drive to Neematighat to board country boat to ABN Charaidew I- Floating Heritage hotel on the Brahmaputra. Check in for 02 nights

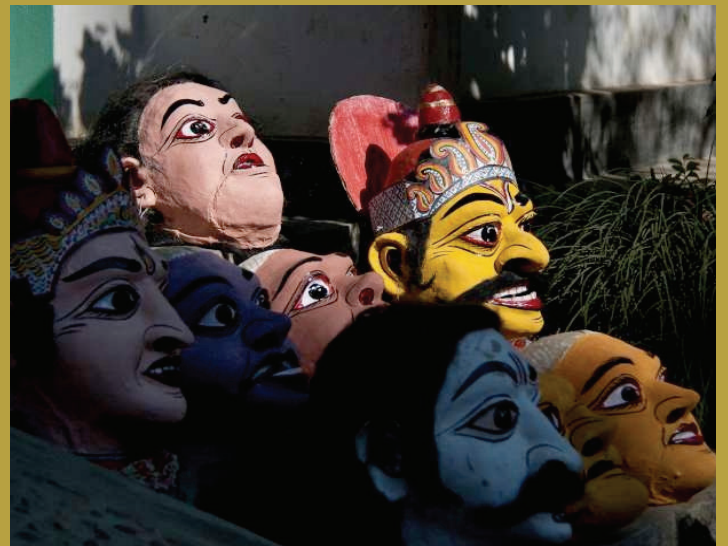
Sivasagar was once the capital of the Ahom Kings. The Shans who came from Thailand through Northern Myanmar to this area in the early 13th century, ruled from here for 600 years. Thus the ruins of Ahom palaces and monuments dot the landscape around this historical town. The Siva Temple situated in Sivasagar was built by the Ahoms and is believed to be the tallest of all existing Hindu temples. Centuries, before the arrival of the British, this part of the world was controlled by a number of tribal chieftains.



DAY 09 - MAJULI ISLAND, ASSAM

Today, after breakfast, board your country boat, which will take you to Majuli Island (approx 1 ½ Hrs boat ride), one of the world's largest river islands. Majuli Island, inhabited by Mising tribes, Deori and Sonowal Kachari tribes, is considered to be the heartland of Assamese culture. The great 15th century Assamese saint and reformer, Srimanta Sankardev had come down here and set up 'satras' or 'monasteries' preaching a monotheist branch of Hinduism called Vaishnavism, which motivated and established a socio-religious movement that ultimately shaped the island's Assamese society and culture into what it is today.

Once you reach Majuli, embark on a full day's excursion by SUV (Tata Sumo/Bolero) on the island. Visit the famous mask making monastery of Samaguri – which still practices this ancient tradition of Vaishnavism. From here, drive to Uttar Kamalabari Satra, another monastery that's known for its monastic dance form. Afterwards, interact with the monks, which will allow you to get a deeper insight into how monks live their lives here in the island. This afternoon's lunch will be served in a local joint. Post-lunch, go for a walk into one of the Mising villages, and observe this riverine tribe's way of live as well as interact with the lovely tribal folk. Late afternoon, transfer to the Kamalabari ferry point where your country boat will be waiting to take you back to ABN Charaidew I.



DAY 10 - MAJULI- KAZIRANGA, ASSAM

After breakfast board your country boat to Neamati Ghat (01 ½ hrs). Later continue drive to Kaziranga (02 hrs). On arrival check in at hotel for 02 nights. Later in the afternoon visit a local tribal village (Durgapur) and Orchid Park cum and Biodiversity Conservation Centre at Kaziranga.

The Kaziranga Orchid Park cum Biodiversity Conservation Centre is spread across 16 bighas of land. It also has a photo gallery of 500 orchids, a greenhouse, lakes with boating and angling facilities and small tree-houses, among other attractions. The basic purpose of opening this park was to conserve local varieties of orchids, flowers, fruits, fish and also to spread cultural awareness knowledge . Those



local fruits, pithas (local cakes) and enjoy Borgeet and Xattriya dance performances as well. Experts have been involved to give shape to the park. Khonjit Gogoi, a teacher who has been preserving orchids for the past 20 years pitched in to shape the park. As did Mahan Bora, a farmer, with his 10-year experience in collecting paddy varieties, Kunti Bora, an expert in medicinal plants, who helped in opening a medicinal plants sales counter, Bihu expert, Dhaneswar Saikia who showcases the original Bihu dance forms and music while Xattriya expert, Biplob Baruah for Xattriya dance training.

Kaziranga National Park - Kaziranga National Park - is a World Heritage Site, where more than 75% of the world's total population of the great Indian One Horned Rhinoceros can be found. It lies on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River and is one of the oldest parks of Assam. Besides rhinos, the Asiatic Water Buffalo, Elephants, Royal Bengal Tigers, Swamp deer, Barking deer and Hog deer can be



seen. About 400 species of birds are found in Kaziranga National Park. To name a few- Swamp Francolin, Great Hornbill, Pallas Fish Eagle, Pied Falconets, Greater Adjutant Stork, Long Billed Vulture. There is no telling what one might find in Kaziranga but it is always a great experience. The specialty here is the Blue naped pitta among a host of Raptors and Waterfowl. The adjoining buffer areas are worth a try too, as numerous rare sightings are reported regularly.

Note : National Park in this sector remains open from 1st November to 30th April every year. However during October like previous year, we are hopeful that this coming October also the Forest Dept. will be able to keep the National Park open for Safari's in October. However, this can only be confirmed nearer to date, which Forest Dept. will declare keeping the weather and other factors in mind. In case park is opened in October there is limited access as full access to all the ranges are normally not permitted due to weather and road condition. Alternatively 01 November to 30 April is confirmed date for opening of park. Hence suggest to plan the trip accordingly.

DAY 11 - AT KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK, ASSAM

We spend the full day exploring the beautiful forests and grasslands of the National Park with morning 01 Elephant Safari (Optional and subject to availability) followed by 01 Jeep Safari post breakfast. Post lunch enjoy another Jeep Safari.

ELEPHANT SAFARI: Approximately 45 mins duration 0515 hrs to 0615 hrs & 0615 hrs to 0715 hrs

Elephant safari for foreign nationals are held only on Kaziranga Range, Kohora (Central Range) Allocation of elephant riding seats and timings are regulated by the forest department, Kaziranga National Park, Government of Assam. The tickets for the same are issued only on the previous evening of the ride after 7:30 PM. subject to availability. It starts very early in the morning and continues for approx 45 minutes. It is the best way to explore the wide variety of wildlife in Kaziranga National Park. The park is covered by elephant grass which is very high and so the view from elephant back is perfect! During the course of the safari one can see herds of Indian Elephants, One-horned Rhinoceros at a very close distance. This proximity to wild animals in Kaziranga National Park makes the trip memorable and thrilling. The elephant safari takes place in the central range of the park and one gets good views of the rhino while traversing through its terrain of swamps and tall grass. It is also great for early morning photography of rhinos in the mist. There are good chances of seeing the Bengal Florican from elephant back.

JEEP SAFARI-

Forenoon: Entry time between 0730 to 1000 Hours. No entry after 1000 Hrs

Afternoon: Entry time between 1330 to 1500 Hours. No entry after 1500 Hrs .

Jeep Safaris are permitted on pre-defined tourist circuits within Kaziranga National Park- currently at the following four points. Each of these circuits takes about one and half to two and half hours (or even more depending upon interest of the tourists), subject to local range conditions and weather. Jeep Safari may be cancelled / curtailed due to any reason by the Park Authorities without prior notice.

- 1. Mihimukh in Central Range at Kohora**
- 2. Bagori in Western Range at Bagori**
- 3. Agaratoli in Eastern Range at Agaratoli**
- 4. Ghorakati in Burapahar Range at Ghorakhati**

The Central Range passes through the entire habitat spectrum from ox-bow lakes, savannah woodland to swamp forests. It is very good for mammal sightings as well as for birds (Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Great Hornbill, Rufous Woodpecker). While driving along the trail, one can see rows of Indian Roofed and Tent Turtles (Kachuga tecta and Kachuga tentoria). Water Monitors Varanus salvator are sometimes spotted in the beels.

The Eastern Range abounds in water birds such as bar-headed geese, falcated duck, grey-headed lapwing and spot-billed pelican (a colony of 200 pairs of this globally threatened species nesting on the Bombax trees can be found here).

The Western Range has the highest density of rhinos as this part of the park is swampier. It has grassland birds and raptors (swamp francolin, pallas's fish eagle etc). Smooth Indian Otters (Lutrogale perspicillata) can sometimes be seen fishing in its ox-bow lakes.



DAY 12 – KAZIRANGA-TEZPUR- GUWAHATI ASSAM

Post breakfast drive to Guwahati (04 ½ -05 hrs). Enroute at Koliabhomora Bridge, Tezpur go for Dolphin boat Safari. On arrival at Guwahati visit Sualkuchi – One of the largest weaving village where the entire population is engaged in weaving exquisite silk fabrics. Check in at hotel for overnight.

The Dolphin Boat ride near the Koliabhomora Bridge, Tezpur is a good option for the boat ride lovers. A wonderful way to spend a day is to take an outing on a traditional country boat and go spotting endangered freshwater gangetic dolphins, reputed to have the most powerful sonic sense among all species in the world.

Enjoy the boat ride on the country boat in the mighty Brahmaputra River for a peaceful cruise down the river and witness the grandeur of the Koliabhomora bridge connecting the north bank with the south bank of Assam. During the boat ride almost everyone spots the dolphins frolicking and feeding in the river, as well as many different species of birds. The chances of sighting of the Gangetic River Dolphins is very high and to a great extent can be guaranteed. Cruise up to a beach island and spend some good time in the midst of the mighty Brahmaputra River on the small river island with some light refreshments.

Sualkuchi located on the banks of the Brahmaputra, 35 kms north of Guwahati, Sualkuchi is a weaving village that produces some of the best silk in the state. This sleepy little village exudes a charm like no other. Almost every house has an adjacent shed (karkhana) that houses the traditional bamboo loom- the gentle click-clacking of which can be heard from the streets. You can walk into any of the numerous karkhanas and observe the talented weavers weaving intricate patterns on the golden Muga silk.

In the early years of the 20th century, Sualkuchi was developed as a “crafts village”. Most of the funds for this development work came from eminent Gandhians across the country who responded to the “back to the villages” slogan of Gandhiji’s swadeshi drive. Although the weaving industry of Sualkuchi remained almost confined to the tanti community till the 1930’s, with encouragement from the government, people from other communities also took up silk weaving. There are about 17000 silk looms in Sualkuchi producing an eclectic range of silk products. Most of Sualkuchi’s silk is woven into mekhela-chadars and gamosas. Owing to the increasing demand, the weavers of Sualkuchi have diversified to saris, shawls and dress material. The silk weaving of Sualkuchi provides direct and indirect employment to more than 25,000 people throughout the year.

Guwahati situated on the southern bank of the River Brahmaputra in the Kamrup District of Assam, Guwahati is a fast growing premier city. It is the gate way to the North Eastern States of India and a principal center of socio cultural, political, industrial and trade and commerce of the entire region. Dispur, the capital of Assam is a part of Guwahati. In earlier years, this city was full of areca nut trees rapped by pan creepers. Hence this city subsequently got the name Guwahati. The word ‘Guwa’ in Assamese means areca nut and Hat means market.

DAY 13 – GUWAHATI FLY OUT ASSAM

In time transfer to Guwahati airport to board flight for onward destination. Time permitting option to visit famous Kamakhya Temple prior to fly out.

Kamakhya Temple situated atop the Nilachal hills, the foremost shrine of Assam, Kamakhya Temple dominates Guwahati, as much as the great Brahmaputra river. Kamakhya is an ancient seat of tantric and shakti cults of Hinduism. A rush of devotees throng the Temple during the Ambubachi Puja celebrated in June.

