

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

nature &
wildlife

First Edition 2019
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Editorial

EDITOR Amit Dixit

PROJECT EDITOR Sanjiv Valsan

CONSULTING EDITOR Lasya Nadimpally

CMS EXECUTIVE Benny Joshua

Research

RESEARCHERS Ranees Sahaney, Sharon

George, Lima Parte

Design

ART DIRECTOR Deepak Suri

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR Kapil Taragi

Senior GRAPHIC DESIGNER Rajesh KG

Photography

SENIOR PHOTO RESEARCHER

Raman Pruthi

Business Office

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Indranil Roy

Advertisements

VICE PRESIDENT Sameer Saxena

MANAGER Rakhi Puri

Circulation

NATIONAL HEAD Anindya Banerjee

Production

GENERAL MANAGER Shashank Dixit

MANAGER Sudha Sharma

DEPUTY MANAGER Ganesh Sah

ASSISTANT MANAGER Gaurav Shrivastava

Printed and published by
INDRANIL ROY on behalf of Outlook Publishing (India) Private Limited from AB-10,
Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029

Printed at GH Prints Pvt. Ltd. A-256, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-1,
New Delhi-110020

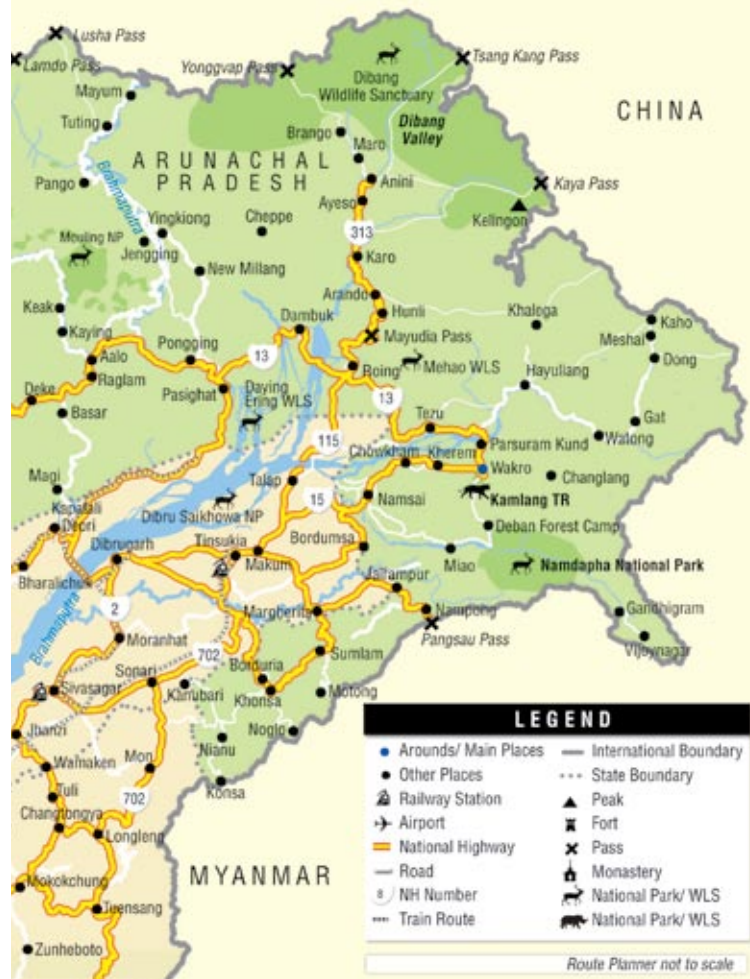
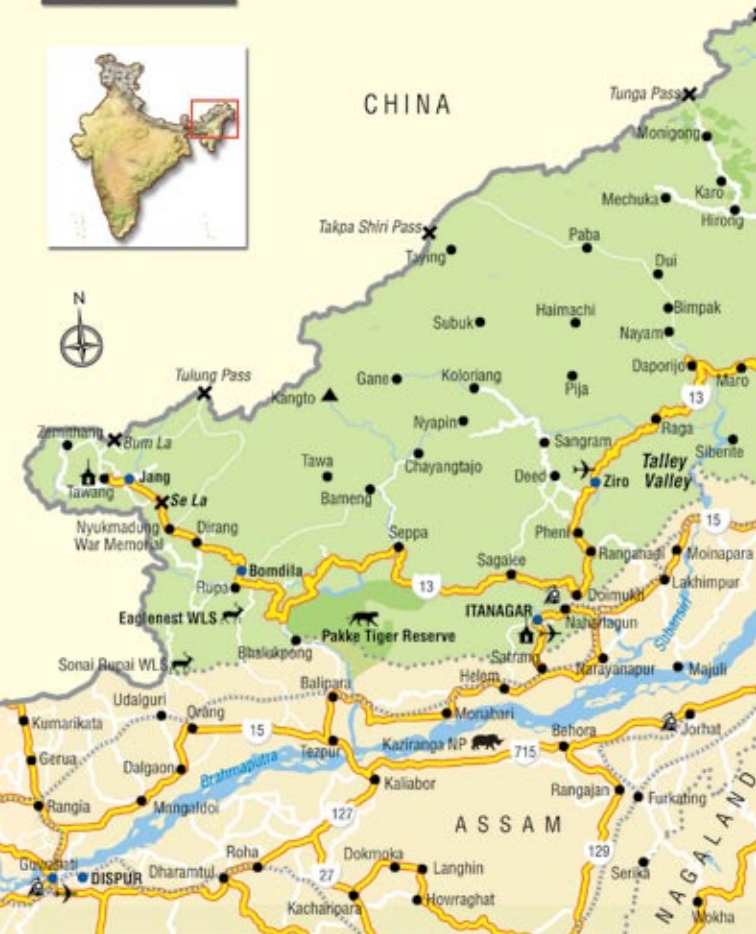


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Arunachal Pradesh

ROUTE PLANNER



Route Planner not to scale



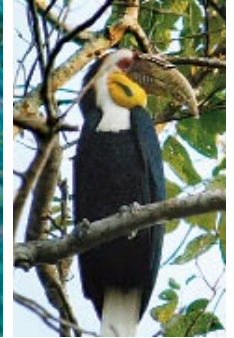
NARENDRA BISHT



SHUTTERSTOCK



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GUNEET NARULA

Introduction

Northeast India's largest, northernmost and greenest state, and one of the world's greatest biodiversity hotspots, Arunachal Pradesh is over 80 per cent forest, and accounts for a significant portion of India's natural wealth. With just 2.54 per cent of India's land area, Arunachal has at least 23 per cent of the country's flowering plants, over half of India's bird species and more mammal density than

any other state in India; new species are discovered here every year, making it a Mecca for wildlife enthusiasts, scientists and researchers. Even with such rich mammalian diversity, spotting animals, especially the four big cats, tiger, leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard, in these areas can be difficult, because of the denseness of foliage and difficulty in reaching core areas due to rugged terrain. It's likelier that they will spot

Namdapha NP; Himalayan serow; Monpa tribe; great pied hornbill

you. Wildlife travel in Arunachal is more of an immersive wilderness experience, engaging not just with animals through a long lens or pair of binoculars, but also the forests and tribal cultures that call them home, than a conventional series of bucket-lists and fauna checklists.

Most forests here have traditionally been managed responsibly by the ancestors of the local tribes, with strict rules against cutting old trees or killing big cats, way

before the concept of 'tiger reserves' even existed; exceptional sightings can still be had even in private or community-managed forests, unlike in other parts of India. Like everywhere else, times and values are changing here too. The state's many impressive parks will hopefully take the conservation tradition into the future; for the explorer, these protected areas are a great starting point for some really wild adventures in the sunrise state.

1. Namdapha Tiger Reserve

Namdapha is the oldest tiger reserve of the state, and is of the few protected forests in the world to have all the four big cats—tiger, common leopard, clouded leopard and snow leopard—in one place. With an altitudinal range from 200m to 4571m above sea level, Namdapha has huge floral and faunal diversity. Flocks of hornbills nesting on fig trees running into dozens are a common sight.

Gaur



SHUTTERSTOCK

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An Asian elephant

2. Pakke Tiger Reserve

Located in the East Kameng district, Pakke is one of the most visitor-friendly wildlife areas of the state and is a part of the forest that continues from Assam's Nameri Tiger Reserve, with approaches to the park from Northern, Eastern and Western sides. According to official records, the tiger reserve hosts 103 species of mammals, 256 species of birds, 31 species of amphibians and 45 reptile species. For sighting lowland mammals, in general, Pakke is probably the

best place in Arunachal. Elephants and gaur can be seen in the clearings, and the evenings ring with the anxious alarm calls of the skittish Barking Deer.

3. Kamlang Tiger Reserve

Located in the mystic landscape of the Mishmi Hills, Kamlang is one of the less explored tiger reserves of the state; there is also the Glow Lake (Glow Lake) here. The entry is through Wakro town, famous for its orange orchards and tea gardens.

Ramsing tea gardens



SANJIV VALSAN

SANJIV VALSAN



Route to Anini

4. Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary, Anini Forest Division

Relatively unknown previously, Dibang has been drawing national attention with the discovery of 11 tigers in 2018. Dibang Valley is inhabited by the Idu Mishmi tribe, who have been acknowledged for their traditional conservation practices. Access to the sanctuary may be through the town of Anini. From there on, you'll need to trek and camp in tents.



ANOKO MEGA

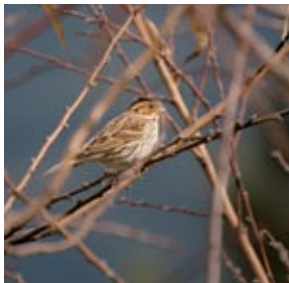
Mehao Lake

5. Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Roing

The most convenient way to experience Mehao Wildlife sanctuary is the two-day Mehao Lake trek. The approach to the sanctuary is through the town of Roing, the headquarters of the Lower Dibang Valley district, which is less than two hours away from Dibrugarh.

6. Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Shergaon

This unique area is host to the *Bugun liocichla*, a bird found nowhere else in the world. The sanctuary also has other globally threatened species like the red panda, clouded leopard and the Himalayan Serow. The sanctuary, accessed through the Tenga town, is also home to rare butterflies like the Ludlow's Bhutan glory, Tibetan Brimstone and also some rare orchids. It's a pleasant two-day detour for visitors going to Bomdila and Tawang.

Rufous-breasted accentor

ARJUN KAMDAR

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Galo tribe

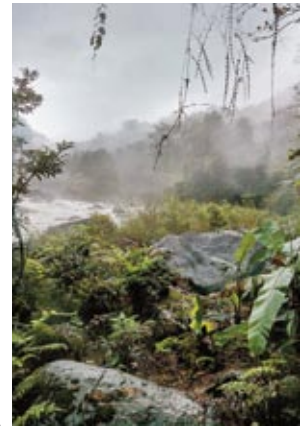
7. Kane Wildlife Sanctuary, Likabali

Among the local Galo tribe, Kane is associated with stories of supernatural phenomena that are said to abound there. The sanctuary also has numerous patches of forest, beautiful old trees, which have been maintained as sacred groves by the locals, which have not seen human presence in years. The sanctuary can be approached from Likabali, and Silapathar town is the closest railhead. The closest airports are at

Pasighat and Dibrugarh. For accommodation, there's a forest rest house at Likabali.

8. Yordi Rabe Supse Sanctuary, West Siang

Arunachal's least-known sanctuary is probably its best-kept secret. With lush tropical evergreen river valleys towards one end, and mist-covered forests and rugged snow-covered peaks on the other, this huge, pris-

Yordi Rabe Supse Sanctuary

SANJIV VALSAN

tine and untouched forest might just turn out to be known as the next big biodiversity hotspot in the region, once further documentation happens. The first outsiders to ever enter this vast jungle conducted an expedition here as recently as 2018, and the first tiger was documented the same month, suddenly putting the sanctuary on the elite 'high-altitude tiger' map, along with the cloud forests of Dibang Valley and Bhutan.

9. Itanagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Itanagar

Surprisingly, there's an official sanctuary around Itanagar town, with Pam River in the East, Pachin in the South, Neorochi on the Northeast and Chingke stream in the North forming its boundaries. Urbanisation pressure has depleted most of the wildlife, but there are still some peaceful green

Courtesy EASTER FRONTIER TOURS & TRAVELS



Ganga Lake in Itanagar

spots left, like Ganga Lake and various riverbanks that are popular picnic and fishing spots.

10. Talley Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, Ziro Valley

Talley sanctuary is a gem that was recently discovered through a collaborative effort between the Forest Department, scientists and community-based organisations. Like Namdapha, Talley is famed for its diversity of butterflies, including rare varieties such as the Kaiser-e-hind, Bhutan

glory and Brown gorgon, and researchers say that this is the only forest in the world where all the three species can be found in the same place.

Since butterflies are an indicator species of floral biodiversity, this fact suggests that Talley's ecosystem is totally unique.

11. Mouling National Park and the 'Dihang Dibang Biosphere Reserve (DDBR)'

Mouling National Park is part of the core area of the massive 'Dihang Dibang Biosphere Reserve (DDBR)', which sprawls over 5,000 sq km from the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary to the Payum town in Siang district. The interiors of the park have not yet been explored and information about the interiors of the forest is from the traditional accounts of the local Adi tribe. The area can current-

12. Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, Pasighat

Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, the only protected wildlife area of the state that is situated on an island, can be quite interesting for birding enthusiasts. Surrounded on three sides by the mighty Siang River, the sanctuary has the presence of many globally threatened grassland birds such as the black-breasted parrotbill, swamp prinia and Jerdon's babbler. This protected area is also part of a larger elephant corridor. Due to its topography, Daying Ering is best seen by boat. A visit to D Ering also allows a peek into the rich cultural heritage of the local tribe, the Adis.



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A view of Anini

ly be accessed by travellers mostly as village treks and cultural experiences, and local festivals such as Uying Giidi and Solung with the local Adi communities in the park's fringe areas through different villages on its periphery. These are accessed from Boleng town, in Siang district, which is connected by road to Pasighat airport. The closest railhead is Murkongselek, near the Assamese town of Jonai.

13. Kamala Wildlife Sanctuary, Daporijo

Spread over 77 sq km, adjacent to the Kamala Reserve Forest, Kamala Sanctuary is located in the newly created Kamle district. The nearest town to reach here is Raga which is about 100km from Daporijo. This still-raw sanctuary is yet to see its first non-native visitors, and lies unexplored for the most part. The closest railhead for visiting the sanctuary is Naharlagun.

Scene from Naharlagun market

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Elephant in Pakke Tiger Reserve

14. Sessa Orchid Sanctuary

As the name suggests, this one's for the orchid lovers. With some 200 orchid species, including five new and endemic species and 100 sq km of protected area, Sessa's forest is connected with a larger protected area including Eaglenest, Pakke, Nameri, and Sonai Rupai sanctuaries, forming the Kameng Protected Area Complex (KPAC), which is an elephant reserve.

15. Lal Aane CR, Arung CR, Martak Riang Community Reserves, Sagalee

Community reserves are a recent initiative taken up by the forest department for more inclusive management of the state's forest wealth, involving the local tribes as partners in the conservation process. The Lal Aane, Arung and Martak Riang community reserves are

Dance of the Nyishi

ALAMY IMAGES / INDIA PICTURE

located near the Sagalee town, Papum Pare district, and a three-hour drive from Itanagar. Along with local treks, the reserve offers a good opportunity to experience the culture of the local Nyishi tribe.

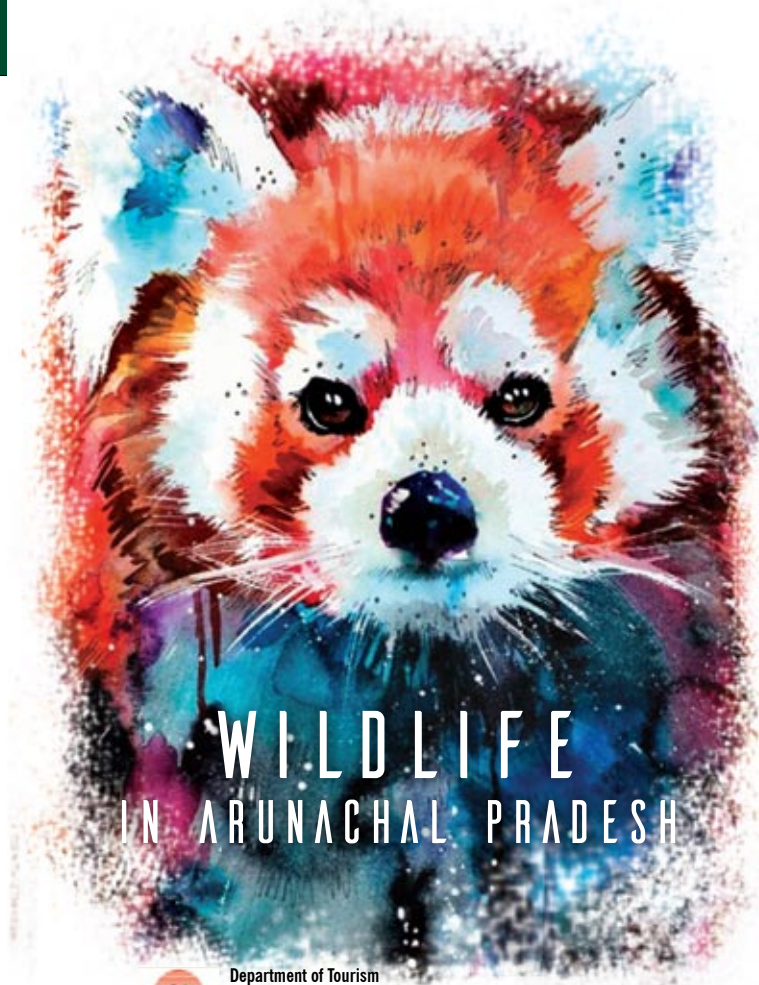
16. Banfera Longnakshi CR, Wanu CR, Longding

The Banfera and Longnakshi community reserves are located in the heartland of the Wancho tribe, closely related to the Konyak tribe across the border in Nagaland, as well as tribes across the nearby Myanmar border. Foreign tourists might require special permission to enter this border area, if they are allowed at all. The entire area between Aassam's Joypur Rainforest to Tirap, Longding and northern Nagaland is a major elephant corridor. The community reserve can be approached through Longding town, a six-hour

drive away from Dibrugarh, the closest airport. Very few wildlifers or travellers have been here so far.

17. Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve (SBVCR), Shergaon

This community reserve was awarded the prestigious India Biodiversity Award in 2018 for the conservation efforts of the Bugun community for the rare *Bugun liocichla*, a bird endemic to the area. SBVCR is adjacent to Eaglenest, and forms the core of the larger conservation area on the lands of the Bugun, the local tribe inhabiting the area. Amalgamating traditional knowledge of the tribe with modern principles of conservation, the project has been instrumental in the conservation of the bird. The reserve is accessed through Tenga town, which is well connected to Tezpur and Guwahati. ■



WILDLIFE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH



Department of Tourism

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India
Phone: +91-360-2214745 | E-mail: tourismdirectorap@gmail.com
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WESTERN ARUNACHAL





PAKKE TIGER RESERVE

■ DEVATHI PARASHURAM

An evening in Seijosa, separated from the Pakke Tiger Reserve by the Pakke River, typically involves enjoying a cup of *lal chai* as you watch the sun set and wait for wreathed hornbills to make an appearance. Soon enough and from a distance, you will hear the whoosh-whoosh of their wingbeats, as they fly across the river to roost in large numbers—sometimes over a hundred—on trees in and around the villages of Seijosa, on the fringe of the tiger reserve. It's an experience you never grow tired of, even if you've been living and working here as a conservationist for years. Pakke is situated in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas with an undulat-

ing and hilly terrain in the south and mountainous ranges in the north. The altitudinal gradient ranges from 100m to 2,000m above sea level. The reserve can be accessed from two points—Seijosa on the southern boundary and Tippi on the western boundary.

Hornbill Haven

Hornbills are magnificent birds, often referred to as 'farmers of the forest' because of the crucial role that they play. By consuming fruits and dispersing the seeds far and wide, they help the forest grow and spread, making them vital to the health of the ecosystem. Pakke is a haven for hornbills, home to four of India's nine species—the largest being the great hornbill, followed by the wreathed and rufous-necked



SANIYA CHAPLON

hornbills, and the oriental pied hornbill.

Apart from sightings of wreathed and oriental pied hornbills coming in to roost in the evening, you can expect to see them as well as great hornbills inside the tiger reserve. The globally endangered rufous-necked hornbills are harder to spot, since they are found at higher elevations in the northern parts of the park.

Conservation Efforts with the Nyishi community

Although hornbills are an important cultural symbol for many tribes across the Northeast, they are severely threatened by hunting and habitat loss. Arunachal Pradesh is one of their last strongholds due to higher forest cover and lower human pressures. Seijosa has a history of wildlife conservation that dates back to 2003, when the dominant Nyishi tribe in the area took



GUNEET NARULA

A black-crested bulbul (facing page); and a hornbill

the first step by enforcing a ban on hunting of hornbills and other wildlife. Next, the local Forest Department and Wildlife Trust of India started distributing artificial hornbill beaks to replace the real ones being used in traditional headgear.

After the extremely able Tana Tapi took over as Divisional Forest Officer of Pakke Tiger Reserve in 2006, he won greater support from the local commu-

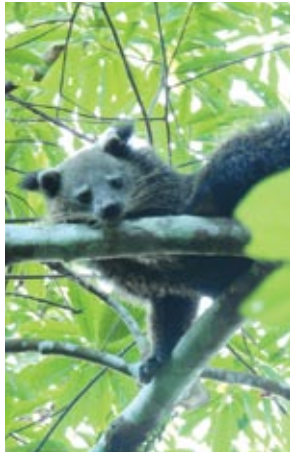
nity for conservation, both inside and on the fringe areas of the park. This is also when the Ghora-Aabhe Society was formed, a local NGO comprising of Gaon Burrahs (village headmen) from different villages in Seijosa, who became partners in wildlife conservation, conducting awareness campaigns and other activities.

All of these efforts laid the ground for the award-winning Hornbill Nest

Adoption Programme (HNAP), which began in 2012 as a partnership between the Nature Conservation Foundation (Mysore), Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department and the Ghora-Aabhe Society.

HNAP is a community-based conservation initiative, through which local Nyishi villagers are employed to protect nest

A binturong

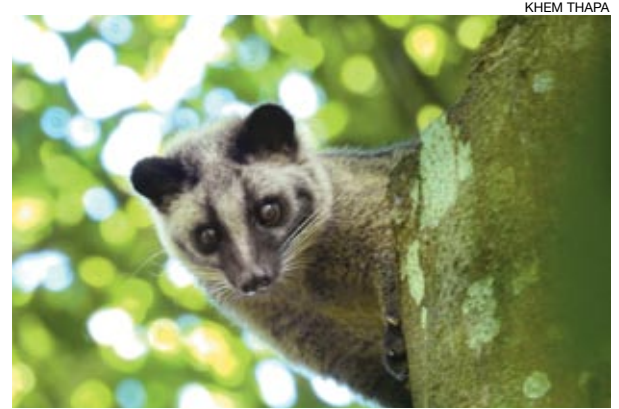


SANIYA CHAPLOD

trees of hornbills in forests around their villages in Seijosa. Funds raised from urban donors who 'adopt' hornbill nests go towards paying their salaries. There are currently 11 local Nest Protectors monitoring and protecting 38 hornbill nests. 119 hornbill chicks have successfully fledged from these nests from 2012 to 2018. Although illegal logging and occasional hunting do occur, there is hope and constant effort to minimise these threats.

Mammals

Pakke is home to a rich array of wildlife, although whether you spot them or not boils down to sheer luck. Elephants, sambar, barking deer, gaur, wild pig are commonly encountered along forest roads and trails. Also keep an eye out for capped langurs, rhesus and Assamese macaques in the canopy and Malayan giant



KHEM THAPA

The Himalayan palm civet

squirrels along branches.

Researchers have been fortunate enough to spot a binturong not once but twice during the day, fast asleep on a horizontal branch (they emit a characteristic, strong smell similar to popcorn). I have also witnessed a Himalayan palm civet asleep in the crook of a tree during the daytime in the Pakke Tiger Reserve.

Camera traps (remotely triggered cameras with

motion sensors) set up annually in the winter by the Forest Department staff have captured elusive animals such as the marbled cat, clouded leopard, tiger, leopard, melanistic leopard (or black panther), dhole (wild dog), jackal, large Indian civet, Himalayan black bear, yellow-throated marten, otters and more. A ferret badger was also recorded in Pakke for the first time in 2018.



WILDLIFE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

A semi-domesticated bovine, Mithun is special to the tribes of Arunachal!
Festivals, food, tradition, economy, Mithun is present in every walk of life here.



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Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India
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Walking along sandy riverbanks and dry streambeds, you will also see plenty of animal tracks and they sometimes tell interesting stories, like the leopard tracks that I once found, seemingly hot on the heels of a sambar.

Birds

Over 350 species of birds are found in Pakke, includ-

Butterfly species of Arunachal



Photograph: SANIYA CHAPLOD

ing the globally endangered white-winged wood duck and the unique ibisbill. Birders will be most delighted when mixed-species flocks arrive, cacophonously flitting from tree to tree in forest patches. These flocks have a diverse assemblage of species like nuthatches, warblers, flycatchers, etc. with racket-tailed drongos as their leader and sentinel.

Some of the really interesting birds in Pakke include the red-headed trogon, long-tailed broadbill (which can also be seen and heard in the villages), pied falconet, Asian fairy bluebird, blue-winged siva, and long-tailed nightjar. Common birds of prey include the crested serpent eagle, rufous-bellied eagle, oriental honey buzzard, and Asian barred owlet. Recently, a pair of Blyth's kingfishers have sent wildlife photographers all over the country into a frenzy, many



TALI NABAM

A parrot plays with a flower while another looks on

of them coming all the way to Seijosa with the sole aim of photographing the pair.

Other Wildlife

Pakke is also home to over 500 species of butterflies and moths, including rare species such as the abor freak, red caliph and painted courtesan. About 36 species of reptiles, including the king cobra and highly endangered Assam roofed

turtle, and 30 amphibian species, including the pied warty frog which resembles bird droppings, have also been reported in the park.

Also keep an ear out for the characteristic mating call of the tokay gecko (which sounds like a loud croak and from which it derives its name), a large and strikingly beautiful arboreal species, which can also sometimes be heard in the villages.

Plants

The forest type ranges from semi-evergreen to evergreen with about 350 recorded species of woody flowering plants in the lower areas of the park. If you consider the entire park, the expected number of vascular plant species is at least 1,500, with about 500 of them being woody.

While in the forest, there are certain trees that will certainly catch your atten-

Banderdima



NAVENDU PAGE

tion. One of them is locally known as Bhelu, which stands out due to its sheer size and large buttresses, which provide stability to its towering structure. This species is important for hornbills who nest in its naturally-formed cavities.

Another hard-to-miss tree is Banderdima or the hanging ball tree, conspicuous because of its large spherical fruits that hang in bunches. When ripe, the fruits open up to expose fleshy orange-coated seeds, which attract a lot of large birds like hornbills and imperial pigeons. Outenga or elephant apple is sought after by elephants and humans alike, with its large succulent fruits which ripen and fall to the ground. It's common to find outenga seeds germinating in piles of elephant dung.

On steep slopes, you will see Tokko palms, whose fruits are fed on by hornbills

SANIYA CHAPLOD



The dense forests of Pakke Tiger Reserve

and monkeys, and whose leaves are used to build roofs in traditional Nyishi houses. Moist areas near *nalas* have a profuse growth of bamboo and cane. If you walk along one, remember to also look out for orchids hanging from the branches of other trees. Pakke offers a spectacular array of different kinds of orchids, with flowers that can range from showy and ornamental to tiny and inconspicuous.

Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary and Sessa Orchid Sanctuary

About a five-hour drive (115 km) from Tippi is the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, a birding haven, and on the way there, you can pay a visit to the Sessa Orchid Sanctuary, part of the Kameng Protected Area Complex (KPAC), an elephant reserve. Access the sanctuary through Tippi. Some orchids flower from

September to February while others from March to September. So in general, the orchids of Arunachal Pradesh are in bloom throughout the year. Eaglenest, famous for its bird diversity, is 218 sq km of forest on the western boundary of Arunachal, forming a corridor extending towards Bhutan, with tropical wet evergreen and

A dollar bird



SIDDHARTHA SHARMA

semi-evergreen to subtropical forests. With around 600 species of birds, its density is second only to the eastern slopes of the Andes. The community-based conservation project here is now run and protected by the local Bugun tribe, thanks to the efforts of Dr Ramana Athreya and his team of conservationists.

Nature Interpretation Centres

Seijosa and Tippi both have Nature Interpretation Centres which are worth checking out. The one in Seijosa is lined with elegant posters full of fascinating information about the flora and fauna of Pakke. The one in Tippi is more colourful and interactive, ideal for younger children. Entry is free and there is merchandise for sale at both places, including the handy *Birds of Pakke* brochure (which lists 138 familiar birds found in

ARJUN KAMDAR



Snow partridges in the Eaglenest sanctuary

the park), the *Butterflies & Moths of Pakke Tiger Reserve* field guide, T-shirts and a whole lot of other merchandise.

Bird and butterfly walks

Visitors can go on bird and butterfly walks with local nature guides (they are available throughout the year as well; contact Mr Suresh Pait at +91-9402037005 and +91-8416090151).

Rafting

The Kameng River is a major tributary of the Brahmaputra and offers Grade I to IV rapids, ideal for amateurs and experts. There are plenty of rafting tours on offer.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotels and tourist lodges are available in Bhalukpong town, but we would recommend staying at the Tippi



SANIYA CHAPLON

Forest Rest House, which boasts a scenic location on the banks of the Kameng River. The Bhalukpong Ghat anti-poaching camp (where you can also opt to stay) and the western side of the Tiger Reserve can be accessed after crossing over on boat.

You can either stay in Seijosa and visit the Tiger Reserve or stay inside the park, for which the following options exist. Khari Forest Rest House, 12 km inside the park, can be reached in 30 minutes by vehicle or in 3 hours on foot. You can opt to stay at the Rest House or in tents. The tents are a better option to connect with the sights, sounds and fragrances of the forest. For Khari, carry your own food rations.

The Forest Rest House at West Bank is located at the entrance to the Tiger Reserve. Sukanala and Jaalinala are nearby seasonally



GUNEET NARULA

A machan high up in a tree; Wreathed hornbills (facing page)

dry streams which are great to explore because of the plant diversity along the edges. They are also good places to spot birds and excellent mud-puddling sites for butterflies. Lanka Rest House is 14 km away from the park and located on the other side of the Pakke River in Lanka village, Seijosa, offering some nice birding trails and views of Pakke and the river down

below. Contact Mr Tagi Heyo (+91-8134864034) for rates and bookings.

Electricity: Seijosa is notorious for unpredictable power cuts. The Forest Rest Houses inside Pakke Tiger Reserve have solar-powered lights but no way to charge electronic devices. Carry power banks or use the opportunity to go on a digital detox. ■



WESTERN ARUNACHAL —A BIRDER'S DIARY

■ ARJUN KAMDAR

Within minutes of leaving the hap-hazard Assamese town of Tezpur in the south, the cemented structures give way to the dense green forest of Nameri Tiger Reserve to the east. Spurred by the sightings of black-shouldered kites, we began scanning the telephone wires that ran parallel to the road in the hope of sighting a migratory Amur falcon perched on one of them, also stopping every few kilometres at select streams in search of the diminutive Blyth's kingfisher and scouring the massive rock walls dotted with beehives for the elusive yellow-rumped honeyguide, a bird that derives its name because of its

fondness for beehives.

Though not proven, legend has it that it leads mammals like honey-badgers and bears to the beehives in order to feast on all the squishy grubs that fall out from the hives when the mammals plough through them for honey!

Almost as soon as you cross over into Arunachal from the sleepy town of Bhalukpong, the dusty, crater-ridden highway is surrounded by a sea of green comprising vibrant ferns, long-leaved wild bananas, palms and moss on both sides of the road. The occasionally flowering bat flower plant (*Tacca sp*), with its purple-black flowers and long white whiskers, dots the edges, creating an ethereal atmosphere, almost as

though the road is attempting to bound the wilderness. While crossing the innumerable suspension bridges that rattle and rumble under the wheels, you get a glimpse of the calming turquoise blue of the Kameng River that flows through the valley, forming the peripheral boundary of Pakke Tiger Reserve. The road is replete with 'BRO' (Border Roads Organisation)

signboards that advocate road safety with their hilarious couplets like 'on my curve, check your nerve' or 'mind your brakes or break your mind'!

Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

As you veer north towards Eaglenest from the army cantonment of Tenga, the tar road disappears. After completing the entry

Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary



ARJUN KAMDAR

ARJUN KAMDAR



A lone bird of prey at the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

procedure at the checkpoint to the sanctuary with a very informative interpretation centre, you head up the only road towards Lama Camp.

Stretching along the western border of Arunachal Pradesh, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary is revered by wildlife enthusiasts across the planet for its biodiversity; reports suggest that it has one of highest concentrations of bird species in

the world! Eaglenest shot to fame when a new bird species, the *Bugun liocichla* was discovered by an astrophysicist working in the sanctuary, who then christened the bird after the local Bugun tribe. Drawn by the striking images and stories of the elusive biodiversity of the region and keen on getting a glimpse of this conservation success story, we made our way there in the November cold.

Eaglenest has an interesting political history; when the then-teenaged Dalai Lama was escaping from the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, he traversed this very path and stayed at Lama Camp—now so called in his honour. Further down this road is Khellong where the Dalai Lama is said to have inadvertently planted a tree upside down, but Nature, on understanding intent over action yet grew the bonsum tree—that still stands strong today!

Interestingly, in the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the Chinese army had proceeded to Bompou Camp, a memory that the elders of the tribe still recollect quite clearly.

On reaching Lama Camp, a fired-up bukhari can provide some relief from the cold wind that seems to come directly from the Gori-chen range of the Himalayas glistening in the



ARJUN KAMDAR

cold blue. In the ravines that lay between this camp and the snowy mountains, the isolated two-noted call of the mountain scops owl cracked the air at regular intervals and once we heard the cracking of a large bamboo, probably by an elephant making its way through the forest.

Just a few metres from camp a pair of green-orange eyes were shining

The spectacular landscape of Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

like emeralds in the flash-light. On focussing a more powerful torch in the opening of the tree where the eyes were, we found it to be a grey-headed Bhutan flying squirrel, nonchalantly climbing up and down the tree. Seemingly unperturbed by the lights, it stared inquisitively at us knowing that it was safe in

the embrace of the large, lofty boughs. A real surprise to see such a scarcely-seen animal at such proximity!

We woke up to the peculiar long-drawn call of the stripe-throated yuhina at the crack of dawn the next morning, grabbed a cup of black tea and began our descent towards Alubadi, where there was a good

chance of sighting the critically endangered *Bugun liocichla*.

The forest trail that we walked along was a sort of boundary between the potato fields of the small hamlet on the left and the dense forest, thick with undergrowth on our right. While clicking the beautiful sibia, we heard the whistling of the blue-winged laugh-

The elusive Bugun liocichla



APARNA KRISHNAN

ingthrush that rose and fell in crescendo, much like a wave breaking. Our ears perked up and we started scanning the undergrowth for these birds, as the elusive *Bugun liocichla* is known to be part of this mixed flock. Within minutes we heard the unmistakable melodious whistling call of the Bugun; our hearts racing, we scanned each movement in the shadows of the bushes until suddenly a male *Bugun liocichla* offered a fleeting glimpse, hopping from a supple twig into the undergrowth. He was soon joined by the female who cocked her head to one side and peered at us—offering us less than a second of a glimpse. There are probably just about 10 breeding pairs on the entire planet and they are all found only in this tiny sanctuary!

Eaglenest is a conservation success story with the



SIDDHARTHA SHARMA

Chestnut-headed bee eater

local community deeply involved in the management and protection of the park in addition to running the ecotourism verticals. A voluntary community conservation reserve is also due to be set up in the coming months in the Singchung village in order to aid the conservation efforts of the region. Of all the places in Arunachal, Eaglenest is the one that has set the path for projects that are driven and

moulded by the communities' desire for and participation in conservation. In addition to conserving the birds, the region now protected from human degradations is also home to a host of lesser-known fauna such as the Bompu litter frog, Abor Hills agama, Anderson's mountain lizard, bird-poop frog, horned frogs, flying squirrels, Bhutan glory butterfly, Himalayan black bear and

the Asian golden cat.

Dirang

The next stop on the road were the valley systems in and around the Dirang river with a bustling population of redstarts, dippers, sunbirds and tits. While repairing my shoes in the market, I noticed a huge amount of kiwis and kiwi wine—this region is famous for its kiwi

A pair of black-necked cranes



farms, historically a miniature sort of kiwi used to grow here, though most farms today use global hybrids! While admiring a disintegrating *thangka* painting in the Dirang dzong; a centuries-old fort that was used as prison in the Vietnam War, we met Tenzing, a local Monpa who offered to show me around. While showing us around the sulphur hot springs (known as *murgapani* in the local language of the Monpas) we told him that we were interested in birds, to which he kept trying to tell us about an intelligent, tall bird that visited during the threshing season. He was referring to the handful of black-necked cranes that migrate to India via Arunachal—ornithologists mention that only about 10 individuals visit Arunachal Pradesh, a fraction of their global population of 10,000 individuals. The black-



The quaint village of Thembang with its distinctive stone archway

necked crane is considered a reincarnation of the 6th Dalai Lama, and hence has played a crucial role in the conservation of the ecosystem; even hydroelectric power plants that threaten to destroy the nesting habitat of the species have been met with strong resistance.

Thembang

Thembang village is situated entirely within a stone fortress (known as a dzong)

made almost a thousand years ago. On entering this picturesque village through the stone archway, one is transported back centuries. An old woman using a mortar to grind dried maize, meat drying in the crisp mountain sun outside bamboo houses, soot-covered ceilings or hardwood and the warm, comforting smell of livestock. One can almost see what FM Bailey might have seen over a hundred

years ago while exploring the Tsangpo gorges to map out the region as part of the Survey of British India. Within the dzong, one can see the preparations for *bangchang* in full swing, a local alcohol distilled from maize quite similar to the potent arrack of the region. The Monpas of the region have collaborated with WWF and run homestays on a rotational basis; thus ensuring that all the partici-

A resident in Thembang



SANJIV VALSAN

pating families are offered an opportunity to earn. They have also demarcated a voluntary community conservation area which spans a huge altitudinal gradient; housing evergreen rainforest species such as the marbled cat and clouded leopard to high-altitude species such as the snow leopard, red panda and Himalayan serow.

Mandala

A few kilometres east of Dirang is Mandala, renowned for its rich bird and mammal life. Aware of the fact that we were now on a sparsely used road, we looked out for any signs of movement while birding in and around Mandala, particularly keeping an eye out for the arboreal red panda. From a bend in the dusty road, we noticed a Himalayan serow nonchalantly soaking in the sun a few metres down the

SHUTTERSTOCK



Electric blue grandala

slope! Unable to believe our fortune, we stared at each other in disbelief as the serow slowly moved into the undergrowth. We went along to spot a yellow-throated marten, offering us only a brief glimpse before shooting up a dry streambed into dense oak and rhododendron forests.

Sela Pass

It is worth leaving Dirang in the middle of the night to

catch the sunrise at Sela Pass, 4,170m above sea level. After crossing paths with a Himalayan black bear enroute, we reached the pass just in time to catch the sky turn pink, violet, orange and finally yellow as the sun slowly peeked over the sea of white clouds below us. Birdwatchers from across the globe bear the stinging cold of pre-dawn at Sela to catch the huge congregations of electric blue

grandala birds, blood pheasants with their crimson face and breast patches and green-white plumage, snow partridges and snow pigeons and the striking iridescent Himalayan monal that resembles an artist's palette. The Sela lake at the pass is considered sacred by many locals and hence the birds here remain unmo-
lest by man, leading

Amur falcons



SHUTTERSTOCK

them to be rather bold and unafraid of approaching humans.

Jang

Moving northward towards Jang, crossing frozen waterfalls with their sabre-like icicles and patches of snow that lay sheltered from the rays of the sun, we kept our eyes peeled for the highly endangered Arunachal macaque that was described from these areas only in 2005. It was christened 'munzala' after what the Monpas call them, literally translating into 'forest dweller'. After hours of scouring the steep mountainsides, we were rewarded with the sighting of a large troupe of munzalas feeding in a small clearing among the coniferous trees! These primates were at ease digging up and eating small tubers, occasionally squabbling among themselves in their typical macaque-man-

SANJIV VALSAN



The rich verdure of Thembang

ner. Else, it was almost like these macaques had embodied the Buddha into their lives, peacefully and serenely going about their business.

A short distance away was the Jang monastery where several monks, young and old, were going about their business in a hurried manner in their flowing red and ochre robes. A new addition to the monastery was being constructed and

a respected lama was due to visit soon.

While we struggled to catch our breath simply walking at that altitude, a small cohort of army-men with their heavy backpacks and intimidating rifles almost effortlessly jogged passed us while we could only stop and be in awe of their resilience! The road is dotted with several army camps and canteens which provide supplies to not only

the army personnel but also to locals, passers-by and tourists, a godsend in these remote areas.

Jaswant Garh Memorial

A few kilometres before Jang is the Jaswant Garh Memorial, built to honour the bravery and courage displayed during the 1962 Sino-Indian war by Jaswant Singh Rawat, a sepoy from the Gurkha regiment. He is

Corn drying in the open air



SHUTTERSTOCK

said to have single-handedly fended off the Chinese by creating an illusion of there being an entire troop with him by lobbing grenades from different bunkers. After more than three days into this he was said to have been fatally shot. The Chinese, infuriated on discovering that it was a single man who had tricked them beheaded Jaswant Singh's body but following the end of the war gave India a bronze mast of his head in honour of his bravery. In addition to several military honours, Jaswant Singh continues to 'serve' even after his death and is awarded promotions as though he were still alive! The locals and the army men posted in the region believe that Jaswant Singh's spirit protects them as they navigate through the landscape.

On our last night in western Arunachal, the gleaming white Himalayan peaks were



SIDDHARTHA SHARMA

The common green magpie stands out with its colourful plumage

bathed in soft moonshine, and a sea of dense cumulus clouds that had enveloped us suddenly parted like a curtain, revealing the star-studded sky that resembled a dew-drenched spider's web on an early winter morning.

Cultural Attractions

Take a break from birding and wildlife from time to time, and check out the people and local cultures in

these three districts. Keep an eye out for interesting Mahayana Buddhist monasteries of the local Monpa tribe. Their traditional medicine, social Tibetan-style culture, performing arts, ancient stone architecture, *thangka* and monastery art, weaving and cuisine are also fascinating. **Thembang** and **Dirang** are particularly fascinating culturally. Dirang Basti, the old heritage village is the most interesting

part of Dirang, and worth spending more time. And while you're there, you might as well go to **Sangti Valley**, another birding paradise, or drive all the way westwards to **Tawang**, a popular spot on the tourist circuit where you can check out some beautiful old Buddhist monasteries, shop for local handicrafts and sample authentic Monpa

Apatani man weaving a basket



DINODIA PHOTO LIBRARY

and Tibetan food in local restaurants for a change. The Bugun tribe at **Eaglenest** who have been partners in the conservation process, are also a great cultural exploration break between treks.

Best time: November to February.

Check list: Carry torches and binoculars. Photographers using long telephoto lenses might want to keep a second compact camera handy to catch landscapes and people portraits as well. The region can be very cold and windy, and while winters are normally dry, it can rain any time after February, and Sela Pass is snowed over most of the time, so plan and carry clothing and layers accordingly.

Operators

Gaurav Kataria is an overall good travel operator who knows the region very well



DINODIA PHOTO LIBRARY

An elderly woman manufacturing prayer flags in Tawang

(9999030436, info@eaglenestbirding.com) Binanda Hatiborah (94352-71651) organises birding. You can contact BAC Voyages (8413996568, bacvoyages@gmail.com).

WHERE TO STAY

For birding at Eaglenest, stay at Lama Camp and Bompou—managed by the local community; you can contact Indi Glow (+91-

8729915566, phuarung@gmail.com). The forest rest house at the entry gate is another option. At Thembang village, you can stay at the community-based tourism homestays within the community conservation area run by the WWF. Mandala has a Birding Lodge (Gaurav is the contact point for this). Dirang has a range of small hotels, homestays and even comfortable resorts. ■

CENTRAL ARUNACHAL





TALLEY VALLEY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, ZIRO

■ SANJIV VALSAN

Talley sanctuary is a gem that was recently discovered through a collaborative effort between the Forest Department, scientists and community-based organisations. Like Namdapha, Talley is famed for its diversity of butterflies, including rare varieties such as the Kaiser-e-hind, Bhutan glory and Brown gorgon, and researchers say that this is the only forest in the world where all these three species can be found in the same place.

Since butterflies are an indicator species of floral biodiversity, this fact already suggests that Talley's ecosystem is totally unique. In 2015 a new species, Apatani glory, was

discovered here. Talley sanctuary hosted the fifth edition of the Ziro Butterfly Meet, an annual meet of enthusiasts, scientists and officials, which recorded 171 species of butterflies during the event itself.

Numerous species of amphibians are also found here; the rare convex-vented horned toad (*Megophrys pachyproctus*) was discovered there as recently as February 2019. The clouded leopard is a star mammal here, found on the higher slopes, though there have also been some reports of tiger and snow leopard spotting. The flora here is no less glamorous, with orchids and rhododendron tours attracting as many visitors as do butterflies and birds.

Hikes

Trekking and Camping in the forest is the best way to get acquainted with Talley's birds and undulating landscape, much of which is nestled between the Subansiri, Sipu and Pange rivers. There's a forest guesthouse and dormitory with a kitchen at the base camp of Pange (1,700 m),

Butterflies at Talley Valley



Photographs: KOJMAMA TAMAN

from where the most popular two-three-day **Bamboo Trail to Talley via Tashi Badang** (there are basic Forest Dept. dorms at these camps) and back begins (Route: Hong Village-Pange-Tashi Badang-Talley Valley-Pange-Hong/Ziro). The route goes through dense forests, giant ferns, and eventually crosses the Lebya Pengo pass (2,434 m), the highest point of the trek. From here on the vegetation changes a bit and the climb is more gentle till the campsite near the Talley stream. The walk back can take a more leisurely pace, since it's mostly downhill. During the winter months (November-February), a dirt road connects Pange with Ziro town, which is suitable only for off-road vehicles, but it gets totally unmotorable during the wet months, when the only way to reach Pange is on foot.



SANJIV VALSAN

Rice fields near Talley Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

Best time to visit

Winter is the best time for trekking for most travellers, since that's when leeches are less of an issue, but for those who dare to come well-prepared with raincoats and leech-proof socks to brave it all, May (the beginning of the wet season) is the most colourful flowering season, when most of Talley Valley's 26 species of flamboyant white, pink, yellow and red rhododendrons put on a show. This includes a new

variety that was discovered here recently and named after Pange. The forest department has also developed an easy 2 km orchid day trail at Pange, where over 100 varieties of orchids bloom throughout the year, with the biggest lot blooming in autumn and spring. Guided walks are also available for visitors in the sanctuary area through the forest department. The best season for butterflies is August-September, when the rare and iconic Kaiser-e-



SANJIV VALSAN

An Apatani man sitting outside his home

hind and Bhutan glory can be seen.

GETTING THERE

The sanctuary can be reached from Ziro, which is located at three hours drive from the state capital Itanagar and six hours from Dibrugarh.

There's a forest rest house at about 15 km from the sanctuary's outskirts at Hapoli town, which is adjacent to Ziro. However, it's more interesting to stay

in a homestay around Hong or Hapoli, and get to know the local Apatani tribe, known for their craftsmanship and hospitality, and acknowledged by the UNESCO for their smart, sustainable and community-centred cultivation and fishery practices.

The forests around Talley were considered a community space by the Apatanis long before the concept of wildlife sanctuaries existed. ■

 A collage of wildlife images including a brown and black cow, a blue butterfly, a toucan, and a bear. The background is a large, faded image of a hornbill.

WILDLIFE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

There's nothing quite as exciting as spotting the hornbill. If you're a birding enthusiast, you don't have to look elsewhere; head to Arunachal to witness the sight of this regal bird!



Department of Tourism

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India
Phone: +91-360-2214745 | E-mail: tourismdirectorap@gmail.com
follow us on [f](#) Arunachal Tourism [t](#) @ArunachalTsm



YORDI RABE SUPSE SANCTUARY

■ ABHINAV KUMAR

Spread over 397 sq km, the Yordi Rabe Supse Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district has an altitudinal range from 800 to 3,300 m, and has a diversity of flora and fauna that is found in few other protected areas.

The sanctuary is named after three peaks, Yordi, Rabe and Supse, which still lie unexplored, and are very difficult to access most times of the year, especially during the rains, when the rivers gush furiously and the forests are teeming with the dreaded dimdam flies.

However, the villages around the park are full of legends, some of which are still kept alive with eyewitness accounts of

hunters who have scaled the snowy peaks inside the park during the winters and returned to tell the tale. Most of this pristine forest park still remains totally undocumented in terms of biodiversity, making it the next Mecca for wildlife researchers, naturalists, botanists and conservation professionals in search of an untouched wilderness.

Arunachal's unknown pristine forest

This previously low-key sanctuary was officially notified in 2007 by the state government, but remained away from the attention of wildlife agencies and researchers. However, things have started to change lately. A wildlife interpretation centre and

stay facilities from homestays to government rest houses are all in the making. The local residents of the fringe villages, wildlife experts and forest department have just recently begun to work together on presenting the park to the outside world. As recently as 2018, a group of conservation enthusiasts and photographers conducted the first expedition, along with the forest department and a team of tribals from Boru Rakshap, one of the fringe villages of the sanctuary. The pictures in this article came out of that expedition, and these are the first photographs to come out of the sanctuary.

First tiger documented in 2018

On a rainy May afternoon as recently as 2018, Bomba Raksap, on his way back from his orange orchard



Photographs by SANJIV VALSAN

near Boru Raksap, saw a tigress with her cubs. He remembered that just a few days prior, an expedition team had laid camera traps inside the forest looking for big cats and rare birds, and asked the whole village to remain alert to the presence of tigers; they were the first outsiders to venture inside the sanctuary, so everyone

Many streams flow inside the sanctuary

in the village now knew that tiger documentation was important. Tigers were, of course, always known to have existed here by the locals, but there was no documentation.

The tigress too had seen him, and like most tigers in such a situation, ran away

along with her two cubs. Bomba waited till the last one of them was out of sight. To prevent the rain from erasing the pug marks, he quickly covered them with banana leaves, carefully marked the spot, and brought back a documentation team from the forest

department before the rain could wash it away, changing the destiny of this otherwise unknown sanctuary. The evidence of tigers at the sanctuary has since attracted the attention of wildlife researchers, and the sanctuary has now also been included in the **High Altitude Tiger Project**, an ongoing multi-stakeholder

Delicious bamboo shoot served inside a bamboo stem



initiative to locate tigers in the Himalayan landscapes of India, Bhutan and Nepal.

The Galo tribe

With their rich heritage in dance and musical traditions, bamboo craft, weaving, wine making and wild food foraging and jungle survival skills, Arunachal's tribes are often as interesting as the forests they inhabit. The area around the boundary of the sanctuary is inhabited mostly by the friendly and cheerful **Galo tribe**, who believe they are the descendents of Abo Tani, the father of all mankind; they are able to trace their family tree dozens of generations back without any need for written documents! Around the first week of April every year, they celebrate **Mopin**, their exceedingly jolly yearly festival when they sing folksongs, dance, drink



The 'community' of the community forest

poka (the local charcoal-filtered rice wine), eat lots of meat and smear rice paste on each other. The area under Yordi is a part of the folklore of the 22 Galo settlements surrounding the sanctuary.

HOW TO REACH

The sanctuary has two entry points: from the eastern and the southern sides. The closest towns are Darak and

Liromoba on the eastern and southern side, respectively. State transport buses as well as shuttle Sumos are available for both the towns from Aalo.

An all-weather road from Darak to Boru Raksap is underway. However, the current two-hour hike on this rough, bumpy road is quite nice for butterfly enthusiasts, herpers and birdwatchers, and tractors can go through with your

luggage. The walk is full of rare reptiles and micro-fauna during the rains, and the light is better here for bird photography than inside the denser parts of the forest. The hike from Boru Raksap towards the boundary of the sanctuary is on foot trails, and it easily takes more than a day's hike to reach. In the winters, you'd end up wading through shallow streams and river banks for a big

part of this trek, and walking is easier overall. In the wet season, the forest looks gorgeous, but walking is tougher overall; the route would be more through the thickets, involving some scrambling and putting up with pesky dimdam flies.

Monsoon trekking is, therefore, only recommended for those looking for specific species found more during the wet season. Nothing beyond

Butterflies in the Yordi Rabe Supse Sanctuary



SOMENDRA SINGH



The sanctuary is home to a variety of bird species

three days' hike has yet been documented, and going in deeper than this is the risky and adventurous lair of experienced and physically fit wildlife researchers, rather than regular tourists.

From Boru Raksap, a detour going left about two kilometres before Darak town, at Degi Potom village there's another entry to the sanctuary that hasn't yet been explored, either by

the Forest Department or by researchers.

Researchers wanting to join any expeditions to uncharted sections of the sanctuary that benefit either the local villages or the overall conservation, anti-poaching and documentation efforts may contact the forest department directly. It goes without saying that you'd have to be in good physical shape and open to anything

in 'the great unknown' to attempt any of this.

Another approach of the sanctuary is from the Liromoba town, which lies four hours away from Aalo, the district headquarter of West Siang distict. Bole village, which is another half an hour on the road from Liromoba town, is the last motorable point. A two-hour picturesque hike from

Planting a camera for recording



Bole takes one through farmlands that are still cultivated in the traditional way through *Jhum* (slash and burn) to the boundary of the Maru Jaru Reserve Forest.

BEYOND THE SANCTUARY

Maru Jaru stands like a mammoth green frontier when one approaches it from the plateau that is the last portion till the *Jhum* (shifting cultivation) lands. The forest inside the RF has some of the tallest trees to be seen around the area. A tree house built by the villagers and the Forest Department lies at a half hour distance from the huts, which serve as the base camp for visits inside the Reserve Forest and the sanctuary.

The view from the tree house is breathtaking, to say the least. Liromoba town can be seen from up



Local tribe huts around the Yordi Rabe Supse Sanctuary

the tree house on a clear day. The structure built with local materials is an excellent vantage point for spotting birds early in the morning.

- **Bat cave at Larmuk Potom village** near the Degi Potom village.
- **Benji Line Temple** (pronounced Benjee Leeney): A legendary temple featuring in local folktales. A Shiva temple was also built there more

recently, which has become an important pilgrimage centre for Hindus settled in the region.

WHERE TO STAY

Inspection huts made by the Forest Department are present at the boundary of the **Maru Jaru Reserve Forest**. Both Liromoba and Darak have **Government inspection bungalows** where rooms can be

booked after writing an application to the Circle Officers of the respective towns. **Homestays** are coming up in the villages around the sanctuary with the help of the Tourism Department and should be available for visitors from winter 2019. There is presently no 'permanent structure' inside the sanctuary, and camping is

Lunch in bamboo shoots



the only option available for visitors. **Tents** on hire for a nominal fee are available at the office of the Divisional Forest Officer at **Aalo** and can be obtained by a simple application. For trekking and camping deep inside the jungle, most local guides from the Galo tribe are anyway experts at building **makeshift tents and bamboo structures** within a couple of hours using just their machetes, locally available bamboo and leaves from the forest itself, so this is always an interesting and practical option for temporary jungle stays. The local guides are also experts at foraging for edible wild plants in the forest, so overall, you would need to carry less weight while walking if you keep an open mind and opt for the all-out tribal way in the forest.

The forest department can also co-ordinate



The locals build a shelter from bamboo

homestays with families in **traditional bamboo huts** in some villages surrounding the sanctuary, on request. Accommodation will be basic by tourism standards, but for hard core forest lovers, the unexplored wilderness along with local charm will most likely make up for the lack of material comforts available in more touristy sanctuaries.

Yordi is perfect for explorers who place aspects such as culture, nature and wildlife above other things.

Contacts:

- Divisional Forest Officer Aalo – 791001
Ph no: +91-8794646174
- District Tourism Officer Aalo – 791001
Ph no: +91-9436696469 ■



SHI YOMI DISTRICT

■ ABHINAV KUMAR

One of the newly carved districts of the state, Shi Yomi derives its name from the Yargap Chu or the Shi Yom River, a tributary of the Siang River, which later joins the mighty Brahmaputra in Assam. One of the most sparsely populated areas of the state, Shi Yomi has been known to the outside world through the town of the annual adventure festival Adventure@Mechuka, organised by the Tourism Department of Arunachal Pradesh. While Mechuka is becoming prominent, so are its vibrant landscape and unique culture.

Wildlife

The wildlife of Shi Yomi has not been studied in detail as yet, but the area

resounds with tales of old hunters who claim to have seen some of the rarest species to be found anywhere. Trophies from previous hunting expeditions are often presented to avid listeners to add the touch of authenticity to these stories.

The black-necked crane (*Grus nigricollis*), a globally vulnerable species, which breeds in the Tibet and Ladakh region, was discovered in the valley last year by a team of the forest department. This makes Mechuka the third place in the state after Sangti Valley and Rupa to host the species in the winters. The bird was a visitor to the Ziro Valley in the past as per official records but the last couple of decades have not seen a single reported case of the species there. There



Photographs by SANJIV VALSAN

are studies underway in the district currently, in search for tigers, snow leopard and the red panda, among other important species. Both Mechuka and Monigong are parts of the area of study of the prestigious High Altitude Tiger (HAT) Project.

Shi Yomi also has twelve high altitude lakes that are good hosts for winter migrants from Tibet and Siberia. The banks of the Yargap Chu have also been surveyed recently by the Forest Department, and nine nesting sites have been identified in a 10 km stretch around Mechuka town.

A walk in the coniferous forests around villages like Yorko, Dorjiling and Lhallung, on the outskirts of Mechuka, is recommended for spotting winter migratory birds from the upper reaches of the Himalayas, which arrive in big numbers here. The forests are also full of



The stunning plant wealth of Shi Yomi district

wildlife signs from roots dug out by Himalayan bear to scats of carnivores. Bears are anyway regularly sighted all around these parts.

The villages of Shi Yomi are full of interesting and perhaps apocryphal tales about creatures that glow in the dark and are found roaming in the night around certain lakes. These bioluminescent beings,

which also possibly include Dinoflagellae, the bioluminescent planktons, have not been studied yet and may hold secrets of new species that haven't been discovered. The first visitors to successfully photo-document these secret oddities of the high Himalayas are yet to arrive, making this landscape even more of an adventure.

Landscape

The headquarters of the Shi Yomi district is located at Tato, 120 km-away from Aalo, the headquarters of the West Siang district. Tato is a junction from where roads diverge for Mechuka and to the other major town of the district: Monigong.

The alpine scenery of Mechuka



The entire district lies nestled in the folds of the eastern Himalayas and the landscape is composed of rivulets, waterfalls and high peaks.

At an elevation of 1,828 m from sea level, Mechuka is a high-altitude valley; arguably the most picturesque in the region. It was not connected by road until 2003, before which the residents of the valley had to trek from Tato to reach it. Essential supplies had to be air dropped by the government, and locals carried other supplies on head-loads from Tato to their villages.

The place was literally hidden from the outside world, which has led to the cultural diversity being intact and uncorrupted from modern influences and urbanisation. For most parts of the year, when rains take hold of the region, the hills that surround the valley take



Scenic view on the way from Mechuka to Along

on a lush green livery. The valley is dissected by hundreds of seasonal streams that end up in the Yargap Chu. Some say Mechuka looks the most beautiful in its monsoon avatar, but it's during the months from November to February that the region is dry and the sky is clear. The place takes on a new attire,

the sky looks perfectly azure, the green of the valley turns more rufous, the peaks are covered in snow and glisten in the rays of the morning sun: a paradise, especially for tired souls seeking inspiration.

Tribes

Shi Yomi is home to a multitude of tribes. These

include the Bokar, Ramo and Pailibo tribes who fall under the umbrella of Adi tribes as per the official records; the Tagin, and the Membas.

The Memba tribe are followers of Buddhism and reside in the area around Mechuka. The word Mechuka in the Memba

A campsite in Mechuka



dialect roughly translates to 'a land of snow and medicinal water,' and was earlier known as Baza Tshiri or a holy place; its existence was known to a select group of Tibetan monks.

The Membas, with their Buddhist culinary and cultural traditions, stand out from the other tribes of Shi Yomi who mainly ascribe to Donyi Poloism and more recently, Christianity. On the other hand, the Bokar tribe is resident mainly in the areas around Monigong, which lies about 50 km from Tato. While Mechuka has seen some tourist influx in recent years due to adventure enthusiasts flocking to the region, Monigong still has very basic infrastructure.

Tato, geographically as well as culturally, is the meeting point of all the tribes of Shi Yomi district. The area around Tato is surrounded by the villages



Running into locals on the Mechuka trek

of the Ramo, Pailibo and Bokar tribes.

The local residents of the villages around Monigong and Tato depend strongly on the forest for their survival. They sell supplies ranging from firewood to local wild leaves in the markets of Monigong and Tato for their livelihood.

PLACES TO VISIT

The *Samten Yangcha monastery*: Also known as the Old Gompa, this monastery is believed to be older than the famous Tawang Monastery. It is an important repository of Buddhist literature some of which has been instrumental in tracing the origins of the

tribes of Shi Yomi. *Gurudwara and Guru Nanak's cave*: Located around 17 km from Mechuka town, this is an important pilgrimage site for Sikhs as well as the Buddhists of the region who call it the Pema Subu.

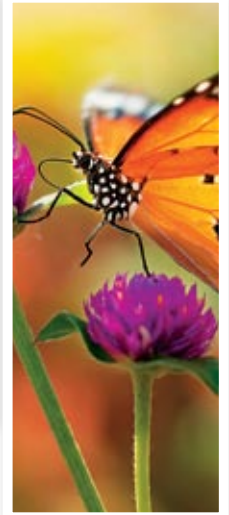
Some local legends say that Guru Nanak stayed at the cave on the way to his visit to Tibet. *Pasang Sonam lake*: This freshwater lake is located about 42 km from the town and ahead of Yorlung, the last point till which civilian vehicles are allowed, and is an enchanting hike and paradise for birdwatchers and nature lovers. Camping is also an option, but requires permits from the local administration.

Siko Dido Waterfall: Located near Hirgo village on the main highway to Tato and Mechuka. With small local eateries having opened up in the place,

the waterfall has become a popular stop. *Treks* vary from short one-day hikes like the Mechuka La trek near Dorjiling village to the arduous Damjen La trek, which requires at least 5 days and a lot of grit.

How to reach

The towns of Tato, Mechuka and Monigong can be reached from Aalo though private taxis and shared cabs, or through a twice-a-week chopper service from Naharlagun. Aalo is further connected to the plains by road to Murkongselek (142 km, 4 hrs), the closest rail head and to Dibrugarh (256 km 6.5 hrs) airport/railway station. A regular service of shared Line Sumos as well as state transport buses is available for Aalo from both places. Information about the treks as well as options such as porters and guides are available with local travel agencies at Mechuka. ■



WILDLIFE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Think hundreds of species of butterflies, think colours! Now, imagine a butterfly meet! Now, book your tickets to Talley Valley in central Arunachal.



Department of Tourism

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India
Phone: +91-360-2214745 | E-mail: tourismdirectorap@gmail.com
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NGUDA POKCHO

■ TAJUM YOMCHA &
SANJIV VALSAN

Nguda Pokcho is a special Community forest in Central Arunachal's Lepa Rada district, which has been conserved purely by tribal initiative. A 16,000-hectare 'unofficial' reserve formed out of a conglomeration of land held by seven villages on the fringes of an unexplored forest near Basar, Nguda Pokcho is an interesting experiment in community-based environmental conservation. The forest is a watershed area for five major rivers—Hingen, Hipo, Echi, Kidi and Hei. Considering the importance of water security, the local Galo tribals from these villages, co-ordinated by the NGO Gumin Rego Kilaju (GRK),

got together to keep the forest alive, secure their water, promote ecotourism, and discourage hunting and slash-and-burn cultivation.

The wildlife

The community-declared reserve is mostly sub-tropical evergreen forest, with moderate to steep precipitous hills, deep valleys and rippling rivulets. It has some interesting *tapen purungs* (bat caves), *hobe-bereks* (homes of macaques), massive waterfalls and all sorts of villages, ranging from tiny hamlets in the middle of the woods to larger, spotlessly clean ones. There are several rare and endangered plants here, with as many as 120 species of orchids and four different species of bamboos recorded within a short history of primary documentation. Preliminary

data also shows 31 species of mammals, including the threatened Chinese Pangolin and four cat species, the clouded leopard, marbled cat, common leopard and leopard cat. Also in the primary records itself are over 150 species birds, of which the Blyth's kingfisher is a star. In what might come as an even bigger attraction for birders, villag-

Nguda Pokcho community forest



TAJUM YOMCHA

ers here have also reported seeing the *Bugun liochicla*, a rare bird previously known to exist only at Eaglenest.

Trekking

Walking is the way in. Trekking from Sago village may take at least nine hours till the Nguda Pokcho peak, origin of the Hingen River; there is an unusual wild banana variety that grows

on this route that's said to be the property of the jungle spirits, known locally as 'Yapoms,' and also an endemic variety of bamboo, among other gems. A swampy waterbody here is associated in local myths with stories of hunters who didn't respect the spirits and lost their way. It is therefore, customary to hold a ritual for the Yapoms while entering this forest, which will often involve sacrificing a chicken for them. From Pagi-Disi village Nguda Pokcho can be reached, again in about nine hours through some lovely forests. From Piri village, another route leads to the mythical Hido-Hidi waterfall, another sacred site (3-4 days' hike).

The villages

With some good guides, there's no need to even carry a tent or vegetables, because the Galo people

Photographs: TAJUM YOMCHA



Various bird species found in the Nguda Pokcho community forest

here know how to build one and forage for wild food. If you ask around you'll be able to buy handicrafts and handlooms directly from the artisans in these villages. Homestays in traditional tribal bamboo longhouses and homemade food are easily available by asking around in the villages. ■

EASTERN ARUNACHAL





THE DIBANG VALLEY

■ ARJUN KAMDAR

The region where the roaring waters of China's Yarlung Tsangpo make a U-turn and flow into India as the pre-tributary of the Brahmaputra is the Mishmi Hills of the Dibang Valley. This is one of the last wild frontiers of the planet and is considered the 'Amazon of the East'. Boasting a huge array of wildlife owing to its massive altitudinal range (from 700m to 5,000m), it extends from dense, wet evergreen forests through mixed temperate and verdant bamboo forests to high alpine and snow grasslands. This landscape of dawn-lit mountains has been a source of fascination for many, with Col Morshead and Col F.M. Bailey finally charting it in 1913.

The majority of the population is composed of the Idu Mishmi tribe who share an incredibly intricate relationship with the forests and biodiversity of the region, their customs and traditions deeply intertwined with the forests around. The most striking of their customs is that they consider the tiger to be their elder brother and hence are strong proponents of big-cat conservation and do not permit its hunting. Similarly, other large mammals such as the serow, black bear and Mishmi takin are governed by a set of taboos known as *gehna* that restrict the number of animals killed. Though it's incredibly difficult to spot a tiger here, the upper reaches of the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary at the northernmost tip of the



SANJIV VALSAN

country also hold the record for being the highest altitude where tigers have been recorded in the country, earning them the title of 'snow tigers'.

Interestingly, it has the highest density of wild cats in the country, with seven species being recorded; the tiger, leopard, clouded leopard, marbled cat, golden bay cat, leopard cat and unconfirmed records of the snow leopard.

What sets Dibang apart from the other wildlife reserves in the country is that it has no motorable roads; the only way to visit the place is to trek through it. This leads to a very intimate understanding of the forest as one can see how the landscape, the vegetation and the fauna change with an increase in altitude towards the Indo-Tibetan border. However, although a wildlife sanctuary, for all practical

SHUTTERSTOCK



The Bengal cat in the Dibang Valley

purposes for a traveller, there is no distinction in the forest and biodiversity within the park and outside. Together, they form one of the largest range of contiguous forests with an equal biodiversity within and outside the park. Therefore, the treks offered through community lands are just as rich in

biodiversity and are recommended for wildlife and adventure seekers.

Rafting is also done along the river. Those travelling with children can opt for rafting along a less fierce stretch downstream. Overnight treks to the Mehao Lake inside the Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary can also be organised. ■



KAMLANG TIGER RESERVE

■ ABHINAV KUMAR

Named after the Kamlang River that flows across the reserve, Kamlang Tiger Reserve is spread across approximately 783 sq km and is home to some of the important endemic species found in the Mishmi Hills.

Located near the town of Wakro, Kamlang is one of the lesser-known wildlife areas of Arunachal Pradesh, and was given the status of a Tiger Reserve as recently as March 2017. With the declaration of Kamlang as a tiger reserve, it has become a part of the All-India Tiger Estimation exercise, the quadrennial census conducted across India to document tigers in the wild. This has led to experts from the census team coming to the place, as well as studies

on the flora and important faunal species, but the reserve still lies mostly unexplored. Mammals that have been spotted in the park so far include vulnerable species like the sun bear, clouded leopard and the Assamese macaque. Patrolling teams of the forest department have regularly spotted Mishmi takins and Himalayan serows.

Birding

A marked trail through the reserve beginning with bamboo bridges and a thick canopy of trees eventually follows the course of the Kamlang River. This is a great place to spot some rare bird species. There are watchtowers along the trail that make a good vantage point for birders. Accessing this route and the

watchtowers requires the permission of the Forest Department; you'll need to do this early in the morning. The banks of the Kamlang River are a good place to spot 'mud-puddling' butterflies, which swarm the wet grounds in flocks, looking for nutrients. The reserve also has a few salt licks where predator signs can readily be seen. The

Bamboo bridge across the river



upper reaches of the park have alpine vegetation, particularly Daphabhum peak, bordering Namdapha Tiger Reserve.

Glow Lake

A six hour long hike spanning about 20 kilometres takes one to the Glow Lake, a high-altitude lake spread across about 150 hectares located inside the reserve. This is a good place to spot winter migratory birds from Siberia. The name of the lake is derived from the Mishmi word for water, and it holds special place in the local village myths. The forest authorities have built a small rest house, which has made the hike to the lake far more accessible. Tents are also available for a fee for those looking for that kind of experience. The sunrise views are great on a clear day and spending the night under the stars at the lake is strongly recommend-

Photographs by ABHINAV KUMAR



Camping in the Kamlang Tiger Reserve

ed. Local guides and porters can be found once the forest authorities grant trekking permissions. They can be a good source for information about the local legends of the area.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

An added attraction is a visit to the holy site of Parasuram Kund. Standing on the bridge across the

Lohit River at the nearby Parasuram Kund, on one side lie the majestic flood plains while on the other the mythical cleft in the hills through which the river enters the plains. The reserve lies on the way to Anjaw, the easternmost district of the state, after which Chinese territory begins. A visit to Kamlang can be further extended to visit the towns of Walong

and Kibithoo, which are associated with the 1962 Sino-Indian War. The drive to Wakro crosses rolling tea estates in Assam, as well as the Namsai district in Arunachal Pradesh, with its

many Buddhist monasteries, pagodas and festivals, such as the Tibetan new year celebration of Sangken (April). The Namdapha Tiger Reserve, which borders Kamlang, can also be part

FAUNA

Mammals: Stump-tailed macaque, clouded leopard, Assamese macaque, leopard cat, marbled cat, Assam golden cat, sambar, Himalayan serow, gaur, brush-tailed porcupine, Himalayan crestless

porcupine, marked civet, common palm civet, Asiatic black bear, sun bear, yellow-throated marten, Chinese pangolin, dhole, dolden jackal
Birds: Grey peacock pheasant, blue whistling thrush, scaly thrush, greater necklaced laughingthrush

Clouded leopard



SHUTTERSTOCK



Several butterfly species congregating

of the same trip. The 2–3 day Mehao Lake Trek inside the Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, near Roing town in Lower Dibang Valley, is another potential trip extension.

GETTING THERE

A four-hour drive from Dibrugarh airport, the nearest one to Kamlang, takes

one to Wakro town, known for its oranges and organic green tea. Tinsukia is the closest major railway station (140km). Other nearby stations include Bargolai (93km), Digboi (94km), Tingrai (95km) and Ledo (95km). Cheaper shared 'Line Sumos', government buses and private vehicles ply between Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Wakro.

WHEN TO VISIT

In the winter (November and February) the forest takes relatively hospitable shape, with the disappearance of leeches and the *dimdam* flies, which can really make hiking unpleasant in the monsoons. Groups of mithuns (*Bos frontalis*) are a common sight during the dry seasons and one may even come

Crossing a makeshift bridge



across a Mishmi takin if one is lucky.

STAY OPTIONS

The sleepy little town of Wakro lies in the Mishmi heartland of the Lohit district. The PWD Inspection Bungalow located here is an economical and comfortable option and rooms are usually available, since the place does not have many tourists. However, the last few years have seen the emergence of some private resorts like **Eco-Resort Wakro** who also organise village visits, riverside picnics and excursions to the Kamphai Reserve Forest and the Namdapha Tiger Reserve in addition to Kamlang.

Eco-Resort Wakro has two VIP Rooms, two dormitory rooms (₹800–3,500),. **Contact** Akanso Halai (08732019469, 08415895451, 087948-



Accommodation in the Kamlang Tiger Reserve

07468). You can email wakroecoresort@gmail.com or log on to

www.wakroecoresort.in.

Mishmi Retreat is a campside and resort at Wakro, with four Mishmi traditional huts, each with two rooms; they can cater to a maximum group size of 16 people. You can call on 0373-2301120, 2300035, 09435130014, or email:

moc.liamg@yevocsidivrup.com

Contacts

Divisional Forest Officer
Kamlang Tiger Reserve
Ph no: 08974214193

Range Forest Officer
Kamlang Range,
Wildlife Colony,
Wakro – 792102
Ph no: 09612461175. ■



NAMDAPHA NATIONAL PARK

■ SANJIV VALSAN

Listed as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, Namdapha National Park, with a core area of 1,808 sq km, buffer zone of 177 sq km and an altitude range of 150-4,500m, is a rare combination of tropical, temperate and alpine vegetation with a floral and wildlife diversity to match. To put the landscape in perspective, Namdapha has grasslands and the world's northernmost rainforests at its lower decks, and snow-covered peaks above the tree line. It's one of the few protected areas in the world with four big cats—the tiger, leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard, and one of the state's popular wildlife destinations.

Terrain

To the north is the Dapha Bum Ridge, a long range of high mountains stretching east to west, with Namdapha's highest point Dapha Bum peak (4,598 m). The Patkai Ranges are on the Indo-Myanmar border, and to the east is a massive stretch of forest running all the way to Vijoynagar, after which the forest continues across the border at Myanmar. Most of the reserve is mountainous, and the remainder is the huge catchment area of the Noa-Dihing (also known as the Diyun), a tributary of the Brahmaputra, fed by snow melt and rain gathered in the vast watershed through the many streams inside this forest. The dense wilderness is still relatively continuous and unbroken. Combined



Photographs by SANJIV VALSAN

Several species of birds found in Namdapha National Park

with Kamlang Tiger Reserve, into which the Namdapha forests continue, this is a vast continuous internationally-shared wildlife habitat that's still remarkably intact. Most hikes and safaris through Namdapha either follow or crisscross the course of the constantly audible river, combined with the comforting whisper and

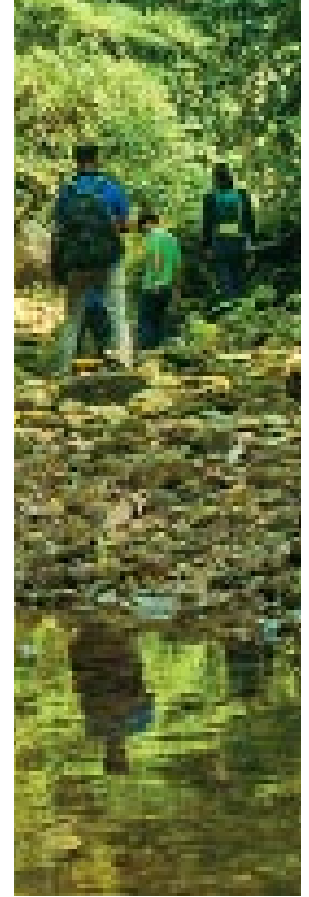
strong caress of the wind, it feels like being both in the mountains and on the beach at the same time, a feeling of peace that is better experienced than described.

Biodiversity

Of the 135 genera of land mammals recorded in India, 85 are found here, including endangered species such as

the slow loris, golden cat, red panda, musk deer, and many others. Namdapha is considered a holy grail for birding the world over, with its many rare, endemic and endangered species. It is home to tesias, the peacock pheasant, wren babbler, cochoa, laughing thrush, parrotbill, yuhinas, Blyth's tragopan, golden eagle, black eagle, and no less than five types of hornbills, and orchid species such as the lady's slipper, blue vandal, foxtail and dendrobium.

Let's get this out of the way. Yes, this is a tiger reserve, but no, you aren't likely to see a tiger in such a dense forest, so if spotting a tiger quickly is top priority, there are better parks in mainland India for that. In dense vegetation and hilly terrain, tigers are hard to spot; but you could always get lucky, and this sense of mystery is the real



adventure. For birds, reptiles, marine life, amphibians, and butterflies and flora though, Namdapha is a sighting paradise like no other.

Deban Camp

Deban, the main entry point to Namdapha, lies on the reserve's western boundary, and for most practical

Wildlife and adventure enthusiasts at Namdapha



NARENDRA BISHT

purposes, this is the 'real entry point' into Namdapha, since it's where most marked hikes begin and end, and where the forest department has its only accommodation for visitors inside the park. Even spending a few days doing short birding and butterfly walks here, enjoying the expansive views of the river and soaking in the sounds of the river valley can be a serene and invigorating experience; you can spot lots of birds and arboreal mammals even here, including hoolock gibbons, India's only ape, whose social calls fill the air every morning, and cartoon-esque Giant Malayan squirrels feed on trees here, very close to the tourist huts, seemingly used to some human presence.

Treks, birding, safaris

Trekking in the 52nd Mile direction from Deban via



Accommodation inside a hut

Haldibari, Hornbill Camp, Bulbulia Ranijheel and Firm Base, and camping on open white sand river beaches with superb views of snowy peaks, especially on full-moon nights, is the best way to experience the wonder world of mountains and river valleys here and admire the wildlife. Large birds like rare cranes, hornbills and soaring

raptors like eagles and hawks calling from the sky and birds and hoolock gibbons calling from the trees add to the experience. The white-bellied heron is a star attraction here; many birders return from Namdapha with sightings of over a hundred different bird species within this hike itself. Nocturnal characters can include the big cats,

slow loris, flying squirrels and the smaller carnivores the marbled cat, spotted langurs and civets.

This is a modular route—choose either a longer 6–7 day excursion to 52nd Mile or Firm Base (for spotting both birds and grassland mammals), or a shortened 3–4 day trip (more birds, fewer mammals) by

Capped langur



MINOM PERTIN

returning to **Deban** from Hornbill Camp itself, instead of proceeding towards 52nd Mile. Tourists aren't allowed beyond 52nd Mile without special permission. On an average, the distance between most points on this route is 5–7 km. Elephant safaris are possible on this route till Hornbill Camp. Post-Bulbulia, climbs and descents make it difficult for an elephant to carry both people and luggage, but they can be used for carrying luggage till Firm Base, not till 52nd mile (a six-hour hike from Firm Base).

The walk from **Deban** to **Gibbon's Land** and back (totally 22 km) is a shorter birding option for those who insist on coming to Namdapha on a tight schedule (tip: don't come here on a tight schedule). Head in the Miao direction on the dirt road through which you entered Deban



Hikers and forest officials cross a river within the park

Camp from Miao town to find this spot. Since most of the route is motorable, it's possible to shorten the walking part considerably.

The **trek to Vijoynagar** takes things to an altogether higher level, and can involve an exhausting week of hiking, knee or even waist-deep wading through streams or muck

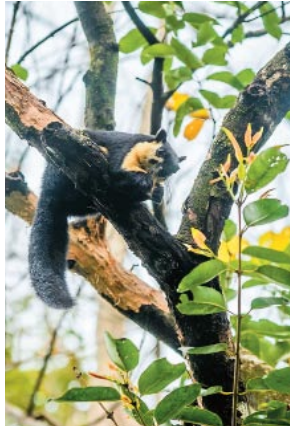
and meeting and eating with the Lisu tribe who live in forest villages using their jungle survival skills, cut off from the world of road access, cell phones and cars. Return from Vijoynagar through the trekking route.

Slow down and go deep

It can also sometimes be a good idea to just put the

camera away, be in the moment and calmly admire the wildlife, without the anxiety of having to 'get' the shot. Putting aside the obsessive 'checklist' style of wildlife tourism can open your mind to Namdapha's main draw, it's welcoming 'feel' and 'vibe,'. The soothing emotions that the sights, sounds and smells flying squirrels here can evoke, especially late at

Malayan squirrel



night, when you fall asleep to the din of the river and early in the morning, when you wake up to the sounds of bird calls and gibbons. There's also a lot of joy in the stuff that's easy to spot here, like some really old trees, the animated expressions on a giant Malayan squirrel's face, as it calculates as assesses the distance between two trees before making that huge leap; flying squirrels gliding beautifully from tree to tree; or the human-like expressions and social interactions between a family of Eastern Hoolock Gibbons—whose feet might remind you of your own hands, and vice versa.

There are also some easily accessible but really magical stream-side spots with huge boulders on the damaged Miao-Vijoyanagar Road at 22nd mile and another one Burma nalla further on the broken road,



A boat ferries tourists across the Noa-Dihing

where you can go for a swim in the icy streams. Foraging for wild herbs, banana florets and leafy greens in the forest can also be interesting for the gastronomically inclined.

Stargazing and night sky photography

The combination of complete absence of pollution in Namdapha and

great views; especially near the river banks, of open skies, the Milky Way and snow peaks in the distance; offer unexplored but superb possibilities for astrophotography and stargazing using a compact catadioptric telescope, especially on moonless nights. Get a light tripod, a wide-aperture ultra-wide lens and camera battery

charger that can be powered using USB power banks, because beyond Deban there is no electricity. The weather in the mountains is unpredictable and it can rain any time.

AROUND MIAO

The local Miao Bazaar (Fridays and Mondays), in the middle of the town area

A butterfly in Namdapha



MINOM PERTIN

near SBI is definitely worth a visit. Twice every week, tribes from many villages in the area, which are otherwise unconnected by affordable public transport, arrive at around 6.00am or 7.00am to sell organic, farm-fresh produce and wild vegetables in crowded share jeep taxis, and return once they have sold everything. Market days are the only two days in the week when more adventurous travellers without their own cars can do day trips to these villages.

ACCOMMODATION AND TOUR OPERATORS

All forest department accommodation at Deban is quite basic. You'll find that relative to the stay facilities offered, Namdapha is not cheap after adding together the various miscellaneous costs. Whatever the case, it



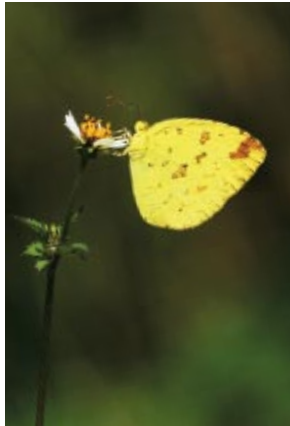
Accommodation in Namdapha

is what it is; there is only one Namdapha and it is special, so if you want in, then that's that. Among the forest department's accommodation options at Deban, the basic-but-charming traditional bamboo huts are the one to go for. Waking up to the sight and sounds of the river is both soothing and inspiring; hoolock gibbons,

giant Malayan squirrels and even flying squirrels, hornbills, sultan tits, and all sorts of bulbuls can come very close, and if you're quiet, photographing apes, giant squirrels and birds should be easy with a 600mm (35mm full frame equiv) telephoto lens and a bit of time and patience. There's a kitchen hut next door, and they'll be happy

to cook wild vegetables and local food on request and provide hot water in buckets. Bring supplies if you feel like eating some particular meat or vegetables during your stay, because all supplies here need to come from outside the park, so the menu is limited. All the other accommodation options at Deban other than these huts are in poor shape, and

A butterfly in Namdapha



not worth it, irrespective of budget. Electricity is available, but not always all day, and there's no cellphone connectivity in Deban or anywhere else inside the reserve, so prepare for some digital detox.

Phupla Singpho, who has also been operating tours in this neck of the woods for years, runs **Namdapha Tours and treks** and a more comfortable quaint resort at Miao called **Namdapha Jungle Camp** (Cell: 094362 28763) near the Noa-Dihing River, where many travellers choose to spend the night before directly going trekking towards the Firm Base direction, without spending the night at Deban. Abor Country, HELP Tourism, Jungle Travels ([W](http://www.jungletravelsindia.com) www.jungletravelsindia.com) regularly run treks to Firm Base, and SEED conducts butterfly tours, photo walks and environmental



A jungle camp in Namdapha National Park

awareness camps around Miao and Namdapha, which could be an interesting way to explore all that this massive park has on offer for the inquisitive traveller. The **Dapha Valley Tourist lodge** (9402490430, 7628873309) at Miao is also worth a dekho for spending the first and/or last night at Miao, before/after the trek

to either Vijoyagar or Firm base direction—it might not have the river views and ambience of the other two options, but with clean doubles starting at ₹800 (biggest rooms cost upto ₹1,800), hot water, wholesome local food, friendly caretakers and the most comfortable mattresses you'll find in

Costs within Namdapha

Birding hike: Approx ₹4,000 per head for a group of 6–8 people. Four-day programme costs around ₹25,000

Taxis from Miao to Deban (Namdapha): ₹2,500–3,000

Regular rooms: ₹270/night (Indians) ₹470/night (foreigners)

Traditional huts: ₹470 (Indians) and ₹870 (foreigners)

Dormitories: ₹120 per bed

Camping charges: ₹1,000 per night

Camera entry fee: ₹1,000 per day for long lens cameras, ₹500 for smaller cameras

Car parking charges: ₹500 per day (Should you bring your car instead of taking the taxi for ₹2,500 either way)

Entry fee: ₹100 per day, to be paid daily (₹200 for foreigners)

Arunachal, it's quite a bargain and serious value for money. Bookings in Namdapha generally need to be done some 1–2 months in advance by email or fax. For booking, exact costs, hiking permission details, birding and trekking programmes, contact AK Das (9436632806, 9612434463). For general enquiries and connections for Namdapha planning and logistics, contact Japang Pansa (09402045864, 08974193313).

While organising a hike with the Forest Department will be cheaper (₹5,000–₹7,000 per head for a four-day programme for 6–8 people) you'll probably have to do the math, and add up the components to determine the actual total cost. Tour operators will probably cost a lot more, but reduce your time spent with the calculator and planning logistics, by

GUNEET NARULA



Elephants in the Namdapha National Park

presenting an overall plug-and-play cost and package, everything included. Use the information in this book to customise your package and accommodation with either the Forest Department or private operator in an informed manner, balancing costs with convenience, according to your needs. If travelling independently of an operator, contact Japang

Pansa for assistance with planning serious treks, longer birding, wildlife hikes and scoring camping equipment locally inside the Namdapha National Park. He is someone who works for the Forest Department, and knows all the trails and birds well.

You will be lucky to get him as a birding guide for he is a true repository of knowledge on the park.



MINOM PERTIN

Namdapha is home to rare species of butterflies

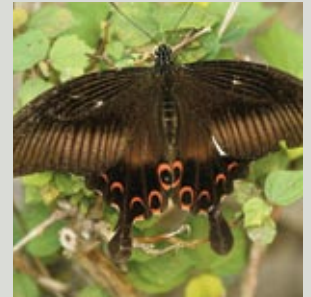
Butterfly trails and the Namdapha Butterfly Meet

Namdapha has the rare and elusive beauties such as the Kaiser-e-hind, Bhutan glory, Stately nawab, Zigzag flag and moth butterfly, which has been photographed only four times in India. Pange and Talley valley in Ziro are already attracting

tourists from across the world; Namdapha has close to 500 butterfly species— even more than Talley, making this the Shangri-La for butterflies in India. Butterflies are an important indicator of the health of any forest—rare butterflies

indicate the presence of uncommon plants, while greater variety suggests a healthy forest .

Butterfly day trails and the Namdapha Butterfly Meet (which also doubles as a butterfly census) organised by SEED, a nonprofit run by a group of passionate young nature enthusiasts and held every few months, are ideal entry points into the colourful universe of Namdapha's butterflies, their private lives and dramatic metamorphosis from caterpillars into full-blown beauties. It's also a great way to explore new paths inside the reserve. Judging by the last edition, which attracted lots of students, researchers, passionate enthusiasts and birders, it would appear that butterfly touring is all set to become the next big thing; possibly even the next birding, at which point, damselflies and dragonflies



(an even narrower niche with a passionate community of enthusiasts) could become the next butterflies!

Butterflies and birding have many draws in common, such as the thrill of the hunt, quest for the next big 'lifer' to add to the ones you've already photographed, and using an 'activity' as an excuse to spend more time in beautiful places and engage



with other life forms and a well-knit community of like-minded people. Unlike birds, though, butterflies are more accessible; you can spot them without monstrously long lenses, spend less money, travel more often and travel light.

Following a butterfly from flower to flower for several minutes for that perfect shot, and finally having it sit on your finger for the first time can



be both meditative and life-changing—it's an easy entry point to the otherwise intimidating world of wildlife—especially for kids and those with fauna or insect-phobia.

Namdapha's streams are ideal courses to search for spectacular flutters of up to 50 different types of butterflies that can gang up together, fluttering in huge

numbers, and 'mud puddling' for minerals at stream sides and riverbanks. April to October are the most colourful months for butterflies, compared to winter, but there's something new to catch here year-round, since every season brings a different set of butterflies, depending on which host and nectar plant is in season. ■



Photographs by SANJIV VALSAN

High-Altitude Teas

■ SANJIV VALSAN

Even at ₹40,000 a kilo, Arunachal's high-end boutique teas are quite the bargain.

When Tocklai Tea Research Institute revealed a study that found that the highly sought after 'purple tea'—a brew made from

purple-hued tea leaves from Kenya—actually originated in the forests of Northeast India, many wondered if there was a chance of rediscovering its mother plant in the wild areas in these parts.

Much of tea-producing Assam, barring its reserve forests, has already suffered

Ramsing Tea Estate

deforestation because of large-scale chemical-based tea estates; ironically the natural environment for wild tea is more or less extinct, because of excessive tea cultivation. But Arunachal Pradesh is another story altogether, and surely enough, Manoj Kumar and his team from Donyi Polo Tea Estate (DPTE) known for

their high-end bouquet teas that fetched record prices in auctions; like their Oolong, Silver Needles white tea (₹17,001 per kg) and Golden Needles black tea (which sold for a record ₹40,000 per kg); managed to actually find the plant growing wild in the forests of East Siang. Soon, they cultivated 500 plants and produced the first six kilos of purple tea to come out of the plant's indigenous environment in decades; the first 1.2kg of which sold for ₹24,501 for a kilo at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre.

Some 10,000 purple tea leaves are needed to make a single kilo of purple tea. Only about 15 kilos of Purple Tea can be plucked at a time. In contrast, 25 kilos of non-speciality teas such as CTC can be plucked during an eight-hour shift. The unique reddish-purple in the tea comes from

Anthocyanin, a cancer-fighting flavonoid that's also good for the heart and builds immunity. All things considered, the price might even be a bargain.

For speciality teas, the plantation cost alone could go up to ₹3-3.5 lakh per hectare. Plucking just 100 grams of buds branded under the 'Golden Needles' black tea label can take around eight hours. It requires special technique

Dried tea leaves



and treatment—only the buds are to be plucked, and then hand-rolled to give them the needle-like shape. Originally from Yunnan province in China, Golden Needles is bright golden, with mild body, sweet taste and sugarcane pulp-like aroma. It is the Rolls Royce among *chais*, and this is the only tea estate in India that grows it. 'Silver Needles,' their high-end boutique white tea, has a greater concentration of polyphenols than even green tea, making it the strongest cancer-fighting tea of all.

Terrain, natural factors and technique need to perfectly align for high-end organic boutique teas to achieve the kind of flavours that can fetch such prices at auctions. The DPTE has gardens in the quaint hamlet of Oyan, near the town of Pasighat and Ramsing, an even more



A soothing cuppa of tea

remote wild area that enjoys all the wild goodness from the glacier-fed Siang River and the wilderness at Mouling National Park at Ramsing, Northern Arunachal Pradesh, which is the core area of the Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve. Rather than looking at producing tea as a cash crop for the mass market and ruining valuable forests, which has been the story of

tea all over India, the DPTE has chosen the quality-over-quantity route for tea, which is literally paying off, and set the trend for a string of new organic tea gardens all over the state.

Prices could easily rise even further, so now's the time to pick up some boutique teas grown in the forests of Arunachal Pradesh while they're still relatively 'cheap!' ■



SHUTTERSTOCK

The red-necked keelback

Lesser-Known Fauna Of Arunachal Pradesh

■ ARJUN KAMDAR & SOHAM MUKHERJEE

1. Red-necked keelback

Although the words 'venomous' is colloquially interchanged with 'poisonous'—they are two very distinct phenomena. Most snakes are venomous,

that is, their venom needs to be injected into the victim for it to take effect whereas poison needs to be ingested, that is, consumed or absorbed through the skin to affect

the victim. Fun fact: theoretically, you can drink venom with no consequences as long as you do not have any cuts through your entire digestive tract as venom is a complex protein that is broken down—however, do NOT try this at home as there could be internal cuts that you are not aware of!

The super-cool red-necked keelback is the only

snake in the world to possess both defenses! The snake gets its poison from the toxic toads that it feeds off and sequesters the toxins near its neck—releasing them when threatened.

Where and when to find them: Largely found in the plains and lowlands of the montane forests. They are active during the warm months starting from late February up till end October.

Habitat: They are commonly seen in tea estates and near shallow waterbodies, such as seasonal streams and irrigated farms.

2. Bird poop frogs

How can looking like shit ever be beneficial? These frogs have taken the term camouflage to the next level by disguising themselves as bird poop, thereby avoiding the watchful eye of predators and

SHUTTERSTOCK



Asian bird poop frog

simultaneously appearing harmless to their prey!

Where and when to find them: Lower Dibang Valley, West Kameng in elevations between 500 and 1,000m. **Habitat:** Wet evergreen forests with a thick canopy; on mossy, rocky areas. Often found breeding in tree-crevices.

3. Bompu litter frog

The mesmerising blue eyes of the Bompu litter frog scurrying in the leaf litter of Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary caught the attention of



AVISHKAR MUNJE

Bompu litter frog

Where and when to find them: Exclusively in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary **Habitat:** Along streams in leaf litter and under rotting logs.

researcher Sanjay Sondhi in 2011. These blue-eyed beauties can be heard calling along streams post dusk and are rather docile, not skittering away like other frogs on being disturbed.



Kaulback's lance-headed pit viper

4. Kaulback's lance-headed pit viper

This is one of the longest pit vipers in the country, growing to a length of five feet. Though considered ground-dwelling, they are often found high up in trees, probably in search of prey. Known as the 'barta' by the Nyishi tribe, it surfaces often in local folklore and is feared. **Where and when to find**

them: Found at elevations of around 1,200 to 1,500 m, currently known to be reported from Sango village in Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. They are the most active pre-monsoon and during monsoons, starting from March to August. **Habitat:** Dense montane forests, often seen near *Jhum* cultivation lands within these forests. Well-

planned forest trails may offer a better chance of sighting this species.

5. Medo pit viper

With two rows of white and ruby-red scales running along the length of the emerald green of this snake, it is unarguably one of the most strikingly beautiful snakes in the Subcontinent. They possess special heat-sensitive pits below their

Medo pit viper



eyes that help detect its prey with great accuracy. **Where and when to find them:** They are common in low elevation valley forests at around 800-900 m in central Arunachal Pradesh. They remain active from February to end of October. **Habitat:** They prefer low canopy vegetation near streams, often seen coiled up on overhanging branches over shallow streams.



SOHAM MUKHERJEE

Hammerhead worm

6. Hammerhead worm

Though biologically speaking these are not worms but rather planarians, they are considered one of the most voracious predators of the spineless world. They possess a very peculiar feeding habit, where they cover their prey (earthworms and the like) with sticky fluids and digestive juices and then

proceed to invert their food-pipes out of their body and suck up the now-liquified prey. Even more fascinating is that these are all-female species; that is, they do not require a male to reproduce. At times, even reproducing by dropping off a part of its body that then grows into a full organism! **Where and when to find them:** All over Arunachal

Pradesh from February to October.

Habitat: Moist areas such as in leaf litter.

7. The pentatomid stink bug

Also called 'gandhipuk' or 'tari' locally, these stink bugs are occasionally eaten

in the state. Folklore says that on consuming an excess of these and getting intoxicated, the patient believes himself to be a stink bug; attempting to crawl under rocks, fly, and pass through small holes!
Where and when to find them: All over Arunachal

Stink bug



SHUTTERSTOCK



The Japalura mountain lizard

SOHAM MUKHERJEE

Pradesh; active in the months of October to December when they are presumed to be flying from their winter to summer habitats.

Habitat: Under rocks along riverbeds in the winter.

8. The Mountain Japalura

Some species of these lizards are highly cryptic, such as Sagittifer's Japalura

which had not been sighted for several decades until a specimen was found in Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary in the Mishmi Hills.

Where and when to find them: In mid-elevation forests between 800 and 2,500 m, generally away from human habitation.

Habitat: On tree barks and undergrowth.



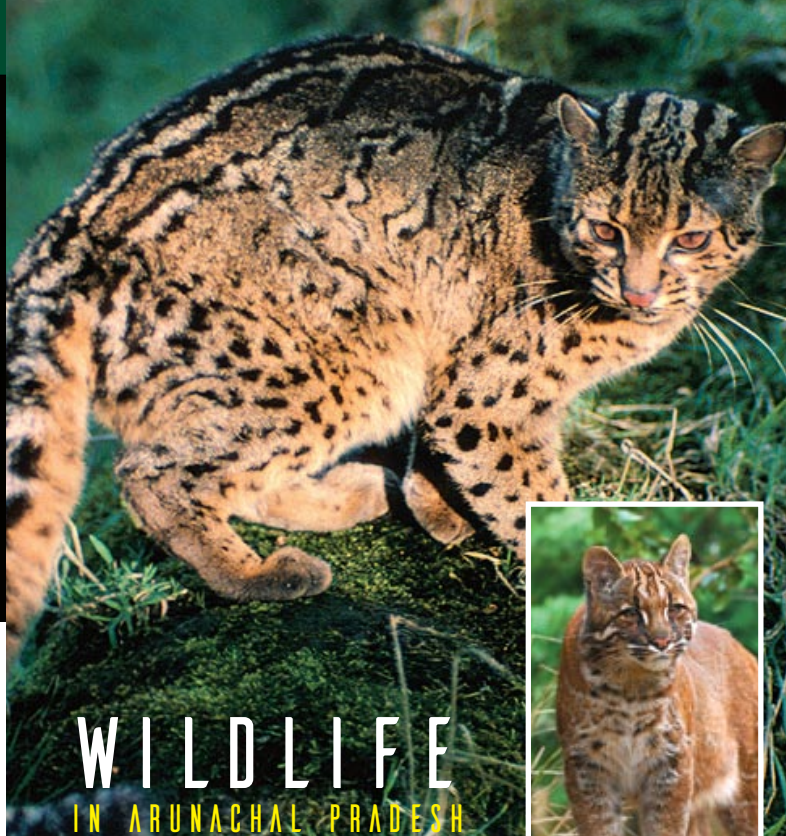
The 'crying' keelback

9. The 'crying' keelback

This is the most recent addition to the scientific knowledge of reptiles of Arunachal Pradesh, highlighting the uniqueness of the Basar region. It is known as the 'crying' keelback due to the distinct mark below the eye of the snake reminiscent of a tear.

Where and when to find them: Currently known to have been reported only from Basar, in the West Siang district.

Habitat: Like other keelback snakes, this species is found near flooded rice fields, streams and water bodies preying upon frogs, tadpoles and fish. ■



WILDLIFE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Witness the magnificence of the Marbeled cat in the Pakke Tiger Reserves!



Department of Tourism

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India
Phone: +91-360-2214745 | E-mail: tourismdirectorap@gmail.com
follow us on [Arunachal Tourism](#) [@ArunachalTsm](#)

TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

THE PLACE

Arunachal Pradesh is over 81% forest – these include tropical, sub tropical, pine forests, temperate forests and alpine forests, along with several sub-types. It is one of the world's most unexplored biodiversity hotspots. Climate varies with elevation (wide range between 50-7,000 mts msl), ranging from humid subtropical, to temperate, and cold, alpine at highest elevations, where it can snow during winters. It experiences heavy rainfall of 2000-4100mm annually. Rains begin around February, but it's most intense between April and October. Most travellers plan their trip during the dry winter months for obvious reasons, but flora tourism is year-round, since different species have different flowering seasons. Butterfly tours will obviously follow a similar pattern since butterfly diversity follows flower diversity.

THE PEOPLE

To put the state's diversity in perspective, Arunachal Pradesh shares borders with Assam, Nagaland,

Bhutan, China/ Tibet and Myanmar, along with a long history of exchange and migrations from each of these places, and as far away as present-day Mongolia. Officially, there are 26 major tribes with over 100 'sub-tribes' and dozens of languages, but in reality the diversity is even more than these numbers suggest. Culturally and geographically the state's ethnics groups can be divided into some broad categories – the Indo-Tibetan **Mahayana Buddhist tribes** such as the Monpas, Sherdukpen, Brokpas and Membas; the animist **Mishmi tribes** like the Idu Mishmis, Digaru Mishmis and Miju Mishmis; the 'Tani Tribes,' such as the Nyishis, Apatanis, Galos, Tagins and various Adi tribes; and the **Theravada Buddhists** like the Khamptis, Singphos; and the **Indo-Burmese tribes** close to the Myanmar border like the Tangsa tribes, Nocte groups and Wanchos, who share cultural and ethnic similarities with tribes in Nagaland and Myanmar. The major religions are Buddhism, Christianity and various ethnic animistic faiths. Hindi is used as a

common language, since without a common tongue, none of these tribes would have been able to understand each other's languages. English is also spoken in towns, since it's the medium of education. In Eastern Arunachal, some Assamese is also spoken. Since there are so many tribes here, tribal festivals feature almost year-round, and make for good bookmarks to plan an itinerary. Animist **festivals, rituals and weddings** almost invariably involve a publicly visible animal sacrifice (it will be eaten subsequently); the faint-hearted might want to take note in advance. Elderly people are highly respected in tribal societies, and senior citizens have a good life compared to their urban counterparts.

Hospitality

The tribals of Arunachal are a warm, friendly, generous and cheerful lot, and in general homestays are far more interesting than hotels. Tourism is still raw, infrastructure is just about coming up and creature comforts might not always be possible in many places, but this is all part of the adventure. You might even encounter situations where you will be offered food and homestay

accommodation by a genuinely hospitable tribal person you just met, who refuses to accept money for it since it is against his culture and ethos to charge for food or stay. So it helps to have a bunch of nice gifts ready in your bag to give away in such situations; these will be happily accepted, and can sometimes go much better with the culture, unlike money. Alternatively, one could also buy handicrafts from them, since nearly every woman in the villages is a textile weaver here, and most older men are adept at bamboo craft. In any case in some tribes, when you visit any old villager's home, it is often customary to bring small gifts in kind such as tea leaves, coffee, dry fish, dry meat, etc; so it's best to prepare accordingly. At the end of your trip, if you have any extra gifts left, you could give them to villagers away anyway just to make people happy, leading to new bonds, friendships and cultural exchange.

Safety

In general, this is a safer state for travellers (solo female travellers included) than many parts of India, and

robberies are extremely rare, especially in smaller towns and rural areas, and provided you exercise basic commonsense, it's generally safe to trust in the hospitality of locals you might meet. However, days typically begin and end early here, and streets and lanes in bazaar areas of small towns are deserted late at night, so it's probably best not to pursue an overactive nocturnal life in such areas. Villages are extremely safe, though. Dress code: moderately modest.

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

AIRPORTS AND HELICOPTERS

The airports are Pasighat (weekly flights from Kolkata), Tezu (to be fully functional soon), Guwahati (International, Assam), Dibrugarh/ Mohanbari (Domestic, Assam - useful for southern and eastern Arunachal), Lilabari (Domestic, Assam - closest to Itanagar), Tezpur (Assam, domestic, better for Western Arunachal). Regular helicopter services (operated by SkyOne) connect Mohanbari/Dibrugarh and Itanagar (via its twin city Naharlagun) to a few headquarters in

Arunachal. These can be incredibly convenient, save lots of time and present great value for money; but safety and last-minute flight cancellations can be a concern during rough weather. Additionally, you could suddenly find that your booking stands cancelled due an emergency medical case requiring quick transport. All things considered, it's tricky to plan tight schedules relying on the chopper services during your return journey, when you have a flight already booked that you absolutely don't want to miss. In our experience, here's the smart way to use the choppers: Book your trip into Arunachal from Guwahati or Mohanbari airport and some part of the onward journey by chopper, along with a 'Plan B' road plan, in case the chopper is cancelled; but be sure to plan your return trip back to the airport entirely by road to be on the safe side. During rainy or stormy weather, avoid chopper rides involving higher altitude mountains altogether. Regular, comfortable, pay-per-seat share taxis ply between Guwahati Airport and Itanagar, and reasonably priced air conditioned buses leave every half hour or so between

Guwahati airport and Ulubari, which is near the railway station in downtown Guwahati. Smartphone app-based all taxi services such as Ola and Uber are otherwise the cheapest and most reliable means to move around Guwahati town till you make your onward journey.

TRAINS

The most useful railways stations are Naharlagun (near the capital Itanagar), Silapathar, Jonai, Harmuti Jn. and Murkingsolek (all on the same line in Assam) on one end; and Tinsukia and Dibrugarh (Assam). Guwahati in Assam is also a useful interchange station, since it has a major airport and connects Naharlagun, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh to most parts of India. Be warned that train travel to Arunachal Pradesh is for strictly long haulers; The fastest train from Delhi to Itanagar, for example takes close to 36 hours. Having said this, the trains on this route are cleaner and better maintained than the average Indian standard, especially the Rajdhani and intercity express trains from Naharlagun, and reservations aren't difficult to get, even last minute.

Getting in and out of Naharlagun railway station using public transport can be a confusing affair, especially for those catching early morning trains from Naharlagun. At the Itanagar end of things, the government-run APST bus service has a bus service running to and from Naharlagun railway station and Itanagar/Naharlagun town, coinciding with the departure and arrival of major trains, but these are easier to reach from Naharlagun railway station to Itanagar/Naharlagun town than the other way around. These 'feeder service' buses leave downtown very shortly after the arrival of each train, so get off the train quickly if you need to catch them. Taxis are generally available at the railway station as well.

LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There's a whole biodiversity in these category, ranging from the cheaper state-run APST state buses, to private bus operators such as Network, and budget-friendly 'Line Sumos,' which are basically cramped share SUV taxis plying between different towns and villages, with a medley of Bollywood songs sometimes playing nonstop

along the route. Line taxis penetrate deeper into Arunachal than the other modes, and reach fast as well. Booking more than one seat per traveller (2 or 3 seats) could still work out cheaper than hiring your own car, let you control the music (!) and can often be a more acceptable compromise between cost and comfort when you don't have your own car. Or better yet, if travelling in a big group, hire the whole vehicle by booking all 10 seats, which can oddly still work out cheaper than 'hiring a car.' Safety-wise, this can be a particularly smart choice on tricky routes and difficult mountain roads, where the Line Sumo driver who does a certain route daily would know the terrain better than someone who's less familiar with the place. Most towns have a bazaar area, where you'll find the 'counter' where you can enquire about bus and Line taxi services, and even hire private cars. Bookings can subsequently happen even over the phone, and payment is strictly cash only.

Itanagar town has expensive three-wheeler 'auto-rickshaws' and cheap 'Trackers' and 'Tempos,' which are

basically share-taxis that ply along the long arterial road covering the length of both Itanagar and Naharlagun, and on to Doimukh and the Banderdewa Gate, forming the border with Assam. At night, even these services stop, and the rickshaws nearly triple their rates. Even later into the night (post 9pm) you will often find no transport at all, at any price! So it's best to have a car in Itanagar, especially if you plan to return to your room late at night. Towns like Roing in Lower Dibang Valley, however have more reasonably priced and reliable auto-rickshaws, so local public transport varies greatly from town to town. By and large, it's best to have your own vehicle, should you choose to travel without an operator who arranges everything for you. Whatever the case, rush hour traffic in Itanagar is real, and you want to avoid being in it.

ROAD TRAVEL

Driving into Arunachal always involves crossing Assam, where the roads are much better, but once you enter hilly terrain, the story changes. Mountain road conditions in Arunachal can vary from buttery smooth and comfortable

to adventurous, off-roader style rollercoaster experiences. Don't be fooled by linear distances between two points the map — negotiating rough, zigzaggy mountain roads can account for biggest component of travel time in Arunachal, especially if you're planning several regions of this large state on the same trip. It's always a good idea to enquire not just about distances, but also road conditions, while charting out your routes. It rains here for nearly nine months of the year, so this is worth keeping in mind, especially if you're cycling or motorbiking. Road conditions are best in the dry season (Oct-Feb), when road travel times are a lot faster. Regular Indian driving licenses are valid in Arunachal, but try and avoid negotiating rough mountain roads in foggy or stormy weather at night; in some instances travel on this routes may be officially closed during this time to ensure that mishaps are avoided; it's safest to either wait till the light or weather clears up, or get a person who's familiar with the area to drive. Arunachal Pradesh may be a mountain biking paradise, but spontaneously renting bicycles is

almost unheard of in these parts; so if you're planning on cycling, either get your own, rent a bike from Assam or get your tour operator to make the arrangements.

ATMs, cash, Communication, Internet: Be sure to stock up on cash, because in many interior places you'd want to visit, credit card payment isn't possible, and ATMs are also known to run out of cash intermittently. Most urban and semi-urban and village areas have cellphone coverage, but the operator may vary, so carrying dual SIM phones or multiple phones is advisable if connectivity is vital during your stay. You can be sure however, that many of the most beautiful forests in Arunachal will not have mobile coverage, so prepare accordingly. For internet, you'll have to depend on your cellphone and hotspots most of the time. A power bank can also be handy during power cuts, especially in remote areas. India Post's 'Speed Post' service interestingly works better in Arunachal Pradesh than most parts of India, and can be useful in smaller towns and villages, where private courier companies don't operate.

PERMITS AND BORDERS

Arunachal Pradesh lies on India's border with Bhutan, China/Tibet and Myanmar, but for the moment, tourists aren't allowed to cross over into these countries from Arunachal via these borders, either with or without the relevant visas. Indians and Myanmar citizens are occasionally allowed to cross the Pangsau Pass near Nampong, in Changlang District for a day, but lately, this passage has been opened to the general public somewhat less consistently.

Entering reserve forest areas and militarily or politically sensitive border areas might require special permission from the concerned authorities, such as the local Forest Range office, army authorities, DC, ADC, etc. In general, additional permissions from local authorities are required for sport angling or river rafting, which your tour operator will manage. Foreigners aren't allowed to enter certain border areas of Arunachal Pradesh. Unlike in other parts of India, most forests and water bodies in tribal areas are either

community-managed or private property, so avoid fishing, harvesting from orchards or farms excessive foraging without permission. In the Nocte and Wancho tribal villages of Tirap and Longding, it's generally a good idea as an outsider to meet the local king or chief as a courtesy visit, and in his absence, the village 'Gambura.' In other tribes, having any local contact from the village will do. These meetings can be useful icebreakers and set the tone for some good interactions.

Travel Permits for Foreign Travellers

Foreign tourists in groups of 2 or more (single for travel to Tawang and Ziro) need to apply for a **Protected Areas Permit (PAP)**, which costs US\$30 (valid for 30 days). You'd need to apply for these through local tour operators.

PAP is issued from the following offices to foreign travellers:

1. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi
2. Office of Resident Commissioner, Arunachal Bhawan, New Delhi

3. Office of Deputy Resident Commissioner, Arunachal Bhawan, Kolkata and Guwahati.
4. Department of Home, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.
5. Department of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.

PAPs aren't issued to tourists in certain sensitive border areas such as some parts of Changlang, Tirap, Longding districts. Check if where you want to travel in Arunachal is a no-go zone for tourists. Researchers, scientists, etc might be able to travel to these parts, however in special cases, provided they have received a local invitation and have proper projects in these places.

Travel Permits for Indian Travellers
Though an Inner Line Permit (ILP) is mandatory for Indian citizens to enter Arunachal Pradesh, getting it is a simpler process than it is for foreigners, and with fewer restricted areas. Every district in Arunachal Pradesh has a similar administrative structure. Above the village and local authorities are Circle Officers, Additional Divisional Commissioners (ADC) in the bigger

villages and towns, and above that the Divisional Commissioner (DC). It helps to decide on the districts you are likely to visit while planning your trip itself, because the ILP is generally issued only a few districts at a time, and often not valid if you cross over to another district which isn't on your ILP, making spontaneous travel complicated for first-timers. To renew, extend your ILP or add a different district on your pass, if you don't choose the online route for whatever reason (such as temporarily not having internet or electricity), you'd need to submit a written application to the local DC or ADC. These offices are of course, closed on public holidays. Keep passport-sized photographs and photocopies of your ID handy

Apply for ILPs online here:
www.arunachalilp.com

Hardcopy ILP applications are also received and issued by the following offices

1. Delhi

The Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Kautilya Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.

Tel: 011-23013915

2. Kolkata
The Deputy Resident Commissioner,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, CE-109,
Sector-1, Salt Lake City, Kolkata.
Tel 033-23341243, 23589865
Cell 09830822512
3. Guwahati
The Deputy Resident Commissioner,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, GS Road
Rukminigaon opposite Manasa Mandir,
Dispur, Guwahati
Tel 0361-2229506
Cell 7086026788
4. Shillong
The Deputy Resident Commissioner,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh,
Meghalaya, Shillong. Tel 0364-
2224247, 2506470
5. Tezpur
The Deputy Resident Commissioner,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Parvati

- nagar, Tezpur, Assam - 03712-260173
Tel 03712-260173, 260141
Cell 09435521735
6. Dibrugarh
The Deputy Resident Commissioner,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh,
Mohanbari, Dibrugarh, Assam
Tel 0373- 2382560/2382738.
7. From the office of all the Deputy
Commissioners of 25 Districts of
the state.

PERMITS ON ARRIVAL

Tourist ILP facilitation centres are
at the following places:

1. Naharlagun railway station
2. Gumto railway station
3. Guwahati Asom Paryatan Bhawan near
Nepali Mandir and Guwahati
LGBI Airport.

TRANSPORT DIRECTORY

AIR IN ARUNACHAL

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ALLIANCE AIR
Toll Free 18602331407
[W](http://www.airindia.in) airindia.in
Origin Guwahati

TEZU AIRPORT has been inaugurated,
but at the time of going to press is not
up and running as yet.

IN ASSAM
LOKPRIYA GOPINATH
BORDOLOI/ Guwahati

International Airport
Airport Director Tel 0361-2841909
[W](http://www.aai.aero) aai.aero

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GO AIR
Customer Care: 022-62732111
Toll Free: 18602100999 [W](http://www.goair.in) goair.in
Origin Bagdogra, Delhi, Kolkata

INDIGO
Tel: 0124-6173838 Cell 09910383838
[W](http://www.goindigo.in) goindigo.in
Origin Agartala, Amritsar, Bagdogra,
Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai,
Delhi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Kochi,
Kolkata, Mumbai, Varanasi

VISTARA
Cell 09289228888 [W](http://www.aivistara.com) aivistara.com

DIBRUGARH AIRPORT
Mohanbari, Assam
Airport Director Tel 0373-2382755
[W](http://www.aai.aero) aai.aero

AIRLINE OFFICES

AIR INDIA
Toll Free 18602331407 [W](http://www.airindia.in) airindia.in

INDIGO
Tel: 0124-6173838
Cell 09910383838
[W](http://www.goindigo.in) goindigo.in

SPICEJET
Cell 09871803333
[W](http://www.spicejet.com) spicejet.com

LILABARI AIRPORT
North Lakhimpur, Assam
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ALLIANCE AIR
Toll Free 18602331407
[W](http://www.airindia.in/alliance-air) airindia.in/alliance-air

SPICEJET
Cell 09871803333, 09654003333
[W](http://www.spicejet.com) spicejet.com
Origin Kolkata

TEZPUR AIRPORT
Haleswar Dist-Sonitpur,
Tezpur, Assam
Airport Director Tel 03712-258441
[W](http://www.aai.aero) aai.aero

AIRLINE OFFICES**ALLIANCE AIR**

Toll Free 18602331407

[w airindia.in/alliance-air](http://w.airindia.in/alliance-air)

HELICOPTER SERVICE

[w arunachalipr.gov.in](http://w.arunachalipr.gov.in)

Guwahati Ticket Counter

Cell 09085738939

Naharlagun Ticket Counter

Cell 09436291907

SECTORS:

Guwahati -Naharlagun

Guwahati-Tawang

Naharlagun-Pasighat

Pasighat-Along

Naharlagun-Mechuka

RAIL

Enquiry 139

[w indianrail.gov.in](http://w.indianrail.gov.in)

irctc.co.in

IN ARUNACHAL**BHALUKPONG RAILWAY STATION**

Bhalukpong Railway Station is

connected to Assam by the

Bhalukpong-Dekargoan Passenger.

NAHARLAGUN RAILWAY STATION

Naharlagun Railway Station connects

Assam and New Delhi. Trains serving this station include the Naharlagun-Guwahati Donyi Polo Express, Naharlagun-Guwahati Shatabdi Express, Tinsukia Intercity Express, and Arunachal AC SF Express (bi-weekly) which connects Delhi, UP, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam to Arunachal Pradesh.

IN ASSAM**DIBRUGARH RAILWAY STATION**

Dibrugarh Railway Station is well connected to Delhi, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Uttar Pradesh etc. Major trains serving this station are Avadh Assam Express, Dibrugarh-Amritsar Weekly Express, Dibrugarh-Chandigarh Weekly Express, Dibrugarh-Kolkata Weekly SF Express and Dibrugarh-New Delhi Rajdhani Express. It is connected to Arunachal Pradesh by the Naharlagun- Tinsukia Intercity Express.

GUWAHATI JUNCTION

Guwahati Junction is a major railway station connecting Assam to other parts of the country. Major trains serving this station are Anand Vihar -Agartala Rajdhani Express, Bikaner-Guwahati Express,

Kolkata-Silghat Town Kaziranga Express, Mumbai LLT-Guwahati Express, etc. It is connected to Arunachal Pradesh by the Naharlagun-Guwahati Shatabdi Express, Tinsukia Intercity Express and Arunachal AC SF Express.

HARMUTI JUNCTION

Harmuti Junction is connected to served major metros and cities by Arunachal Express.

Other trains connecting Arunachal Pradesh are Naharlagun-Guwahati Shatabdi Express, Naharlagun-Tinsukia Intercity Express and Naharlagun-Guwahati Donyi Polo Express.

NORTH LAKHIMPUR RAILWAY STATION

North Lakhimpur Railway Station is connected to Arunachal Pradesh by the Naharlagun – Tinsukia Intercity Express.

RANGIYA JUNCTION

Rangiya Junction is a major railway station connecting Assam to major cities in India and Arunachal Pradesh. Trains serving this station are Kanchenjunga Express, Avadh Assam Express, North East Express, Mumbai LLT Kamakhya AC Express, etc. It is

connected to Arunachal Pradesh by Naharlagun-Guwahati Donyi Polo Express, Arunachal AC SF Express.

TEZPUR RAILWAY STATION

Tezpur Railway Station falls under the Rangiya Division. Trains serving this station are Alipurduar Jn-Silghat Town Rajya Rani Express, Kolkata-Silghat Town Kaziranga Express etc. It is connected to Arunachal Pradesh by Guwahati-Naharlagun Shatabdi Express, Guwahati-Naharlagun Donyi-Polo Express, Arunachal AC SF Express.

TINSUKIA JUNCTION

Tinsukia Junction is connected to Dibrugarh, Guwahati by Ledo-Guwahati Intercity Express, Tinsukia-Jorhat Town Passenger, etc. It is connected to Arunachal Pradesh by Naharlagun-Tinsukia Intercity Express.

ROAD BUS

Aalo (SS) Cell 09436058188

Bomdila (SS) Cell 09402476020

Pasighat (SS) Cell 09612453200

Itanagar (SS/AS) Cell 09774034571

Roing (SS) Cell 09436222387

Tawang (SS) Cell 09436836087

TOURIST/ WILDLIFE OFFICES

INFORMATION ⓘ INFORMATION & BOOKING ⓘ ⓘ

TOURIST OFFICES

Arunachal Tourism www.arunachaltourism.com

ITANAGAR

Department of Tourism ⓘ

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar

Cell 08787619774 (Director of Tourism)

Mandir, Dispur, Assam

Tel 0361-2229506 Cell 7086026788

NEW DELHI

Department of Tourism ⓘ

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Bhawan, Kautilya Marg,

Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

Tel 011-23013915, 23013956

GUWAHATI

Department of Tourism ⓘ

Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh

GS Road, Rukmani Village, Opp Mansa

WILDLIFE OFFICES

Daying Erring Wildlife Sanctuary

Pasighat

Cell 09862624766 (DFO),

09436621222 (RO)

Pakke Tiger Resrve

Seijosa Wildlife Range

East Kameng

Cell 08811952541 (RFO),

09436042859 (DFO)

Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

Shergaon Forest Division

Tel 03782-232249 Cell 09436246192

Cell 09436093632

Tel 03778-200016

Namdapha National Park

Field Director,

Miao, Changlang Dist

Cell 09436835658

Talle Wildlife Sanctuary

Range Forest Offier

Lower Subansiri

Hapoli

Cell 09436040268 (RO), 09436047092

TOUR OPERATORS

BOMDILA STD 03782

Himalayan Holidays

Location ABC Bldng. Main Market,
Bomdila Tel 3782-222017 Cell 094360
45063 [W](http://www.himalayan-holidays.net) himalayan-holidays.net

Services Car rental, tour packages,
transportation, accommodations, wildlife
tours, customised tours, forex, ticketing,
passport n visa, all permits **Destinations**
All North-Eastern States

ITANAGAR STD 0360

Duyu Tours & Travels

Location Vivek Vihar, College Road,
Itanagar Tel 0360-216450, 218056
Cell 09436044905 [W](http://www.arunachaltours.com) arunachaltours.

Services Car rental, tour
packages, customised tours,
transportation, accommodations
Destinations All North East

Kaziranga Tours

Address Kadambari Complex (Gr Flr),
Thana Charall Tel 2325969
Cell 09435530345, 09401343501

[W](http://www.kazirangatours.com) kazirangatours.com **Services**
Customised tours, wildlife tours,
trekking **Destinations** All of

Arunachal Pradesh

Guwahati Branch House No 149 (1st
Floor), Kolnadhara Cell 07002412384

NAHARLAGUN

Ravi Travel & Tour Inc

Location A Sector, Naharlagun (Near
Old Cinema Hall), Dist Papumpare
Cell 08257894003- 04 **Services** Hotel/
Air/ Rail bookings

TIP They have discontinued Car rentals

Xcell

Location Hafizan Complex, Ulubari,
Opp Volvo Point, GS Road, Guwahati
Cell 09854121140 [W](http://www.xcell.co.in) xcell.co.in

Services Car rental, tour packages,
accommodations **Destinations**
Arunachal Pradesh, Assam

PASIGHAT STD 0368

DONYI HANGO TOURS – Rafting /
Trekking

Location Tebo Village, East Siang,
NH 52, Pasighat Tel 222324

Cell 09436043393 [W](http://www.arunachaldonyihango.com) arunachal
donyihango.com **Services** Tour
packages, trekking, rafting, hotel

accommodations, transportation,
arrange permit

ROING STD 03803

The Mishmi Hills Trekking Co.
Location 2 kms from Roing Cell

09436875102, 09366709589,
08974299357 **Services**

Car rental, Adventure Tour
Packages for all NE state,
customised tours, accommodations,
transportation

ADVENTURE TOUR OPERATORS

**Abor Country Travels Expedition,
Itanagar**

Specialises in: Adventure,
cultural heritage Tours, camping,
angling, rafting, high altitude flower
tours

Contact: Oken Tayeng
+91 360 2292969, 9436053870,
9436860903

Skype: Abor Country
E-Mail: aborcountry@yahoo.com,
aborcountry@gmail.com .

Dibang Adventure - Anini/Roing

Specialises in: trekking, wildlife,
culture, angling, safaris, adventure in
Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley
Contact Adiju Rondo +919402606309,
+918794120523

E-Mail: - rondoadiju@gmail.com

**The Mishmi Hills Trekking
Company - Roing/Anini**

Specialises in: Hiking, culture,
adventure, camping, esp. in Dibang
Valley, Lower Dibang Valley and
Eastern Arunachal

Contact: Tine Mena
+91-9436875102, +91-89742 99357
Fb Page: [https://www.facebook.com/
MishmiHillsTrekkingCompany/](https://www.facebook.com/MishmiHillsTrekkingCompany/)

**Mishmi Hills Resort & Hotels
private Limited – Roing**

Resort in Roing that arranges tours in
Dibang and Lower Dibang Valley
Contact: 094368 36763,
or proprietor Rezina Mihi
+919862447610

Fb Page: [https://www.facebook.com/
ExploreMishmiHills/](https://www.facebook.com/ExploreMishmiHills/)

Mishmi Hills Camp Roing

Guesthouse that also arranges nature
and culture tours in Dibang Valley,
Lower Dibang Valley
Contact: Jibi Pulu 098628 56981

Ravi Mekola

Wildlife and bird tours in Dibang Valley
Contact 97747 48828, 94024 57180

Help Tourism

Specialises in: Rural Tourism,
Homestays, Nature Lodges, Nature
Camping, Nature expeditions, Birding,
Butterfly tours, Wildlife treks,
'Biodiversity journeys'

Contact: Raj Basu +919434046892
E-mail: info@helptourism.com
W www.helptourism.com and
(Under construction) [www.
arunachalhomestays.com](http://www.arunachalhomestays.com)

**SEED (Society for Education
and Environmental
Development) - Miao**

Specialises in: Eco camps, Nature
Conservation through "nature walks &
learn" at Miao/Namdapha/Roing/Upper
Siang – this is a nonprofit organisation
Contact: Minom Pertin
918974159612/+919436252577

E-Mail: [seedasociety@gmail.com/](mailto:seedasociety@gmail.com)
minompertin@rediffmail.com

Eagle Nest Birding – Eagle Nest

Specialises in: Birding tours all over
Arunachal Pradesh
Contact Gaurav Kataria
99990 30436, [info@eaglenest
birding.com](mailto:info@eaglenestbirding.com)

**Naja and Wild India
Expeditions**

Specialises in: Reptile, snake and
microfauna trips and workshops
and volunteering, structured fauna
expeditions in Arunachal Pradesh.

Contact: Soham Mukherjee
+91-9909906618
E-mail: info@naja.in
W naja.herpetology@gmail.com

**Namdapha tours and treks
Miao, Changlang**

Specialises in: Treks, tours, safaris
and activities in Namdapha Tiger
reserve and Changlang district
Contact: Phupla Singpho
+91 9436228763
+91 9863288092, 03807 222296,
+913807 222296 (for outside India)
E-mail: phupla@rediffmail.com

[W](https://namdaphatoursandtreks.wordpress.com/) <https://namdaphatoursandtreks.wordpress.com/>

Camp Namdapha Holidays - Namsai/ Kohima/ Shillong/ Tura/Itanagar

Specialises in: Tribal gourmet tours, trekking, flower tours, culture
 Contact: Chau Enseng Mantow 8974643450
 E-mail: ensengmantow@gmail.com

North by Northeast - Tezpur

Specialises in: Cycling, motorbike, ethno-cultural tours, wildlife, overland journeys in Arunachal
 Contact Roheen Browne +91-9940416065
 E-mail: info@northbynortheast.in
[W](http://northbynortheast.in) <http://northbynortheast.in>

Kipepeo - Mumbai/Northeast India

Specialises in: Cultural tours, road trips, hikes
 Contact: Piran Elavia + 91 9930002412
 E-mail: info@kipepeo.in
[W](http://www.kipepeo.in) www.kipepeo.in

Binanda Hatiborah -

Specialises in: Birding and wildlife tours in Pakke, Eagle's nest, Tawang,

West Kameng
 Contact: 94352 71651, 99548 61743

Village Holiday Tours & travels - Khonsa, Tirap dist.

Specialises in: village to village treks, cultural tours, esp. in Eastern Arunachal - Tirap, Changlang, Longding, etc
 Contact: Khunwang Tangjang +91-8118951427
 E-mail: villageholidaytours@gmail.com

Wildwildeast - Roing Lower Dibang Valley

Specialises in: Tribal ethno-cultural festival tours, angling, off-roading
 Contact: Tajom Tayeng 7002031852, 9862885645
 E-mail: tajomtayang@gmail.com

Tajom Tyeng - Roing

Contact: Tajom Tyeng +91-98628 85645, +91-94364 36010, +91-70020 31852
 E-mail: tajomtayang@gmail.com

M/s Menchukha Tours & Travels Menchukha/ Itanagar

Specialises in: Trekking, camping,

culture tours between Menchukha and Tato
 Contact: Tsawang Chukla 9402224350 +91 9402224350 +91 7005737596 and Gebu Sona +91 9436074877, +91 940299666
 E-Mail: chukla12wang@gmail.com, info@gtlhomestay.com, menchukhatravels@gmail.com
[W](http://gtlhomestay.com) <http://gtlhomestay.com>

Himalayan Holidays, Bomdila

Specialises in: culture, hiking, angling in Western Arunachal
 Contact Tsering Wange, +91 3782-222017/222216/223818, 9436045063/9436222905 9402257638 (Itanagar.)
 Tawang: 9436248216
 E-Mail: himalayan-holidays@USA.net
[W](http://www.himalayan-holidays.net) www.himalayan-holidays.net

Brahmaputra Tours, Ziro

Specialises in: Cultural tours, butterflies, orchids and hiking, Talle Valley, Ziro
 Contact: Koj Mama 03788-224905/2241931, 9436634496/8575248013
 E-Mail: kojmama@yahoo.co.in;

brahmaputratours@yahoo.com
[W](http://www.brahmaputratours.com) www.brahmaputratours.com
 Donyi Hango Tours Pasighat
 Specialises in: Pro rafting and angling, Central Arunachal, Buddhist trails, riverside camping, trekking
 Contact: Nino Dai, Yane Dai 0368 2224243, 9436043393
 E-Mail: yane_dai@yahoo.co.in
[W](https://arunachaldonyihango.com) <https://arunachaldonyihango.com>

M/S ARUNACHAL DISCOVER PARADISE TOURS Naharlagun

Specialises in: Paragliding, parasailing, etc, esp. around East Kameng and Seppa
 Contact: Vijay Sonam +91 9089722446/9436041860, fax: 0360-2246531
 E-mail: - arunachaldiscovertours@gmail.com/vsonam9@gmail.com
[W](http://www.arunachaldiscovertours.com) www.arunachaldiscovertours.com
 Tawang Tour and Travels Tawang/Delhi
 Contact: Lobsang Phuntsok (Tawang) +91 8826888897, 9818336220
 Contact Delhi: - +91-8826888897, 9818336220
 E-mail: - tawangtravel@gmail.com
[W](http://www.tawangtravel.in) www.tawangtravel.in
 Tribal Adventure Tours Naharlagun
 E-Mail: tribaladventuretours@gmail.

com; johnpanye3@gmail.com
 Contact: John Panye +91 9436252013;
 +91 08414080717, +91 360 2247242

**M/S ANE SIANG Tours &
 Expeditions Itanagar**
 Specialises in: rafting, angling,

Central Arunachal
 Contact: Gandhi Darang
 0360-2214008
 +91 9615432244, +91 8131872400,
 +91 9402617938
 E-mail: - anesiang2013@gmail.com
www.anesiangtours.com

08974141614 Rooms 4
 Tariff ₹600-1,000 Facilities
 Restaurant, attached bath

Namdapha Jungle Camp

Location Miao, 7 km from NP from
 entry gate Cell 09436228763,
 08974141614, 08257994436
 Rooms 4 Tariff ₹1,500; TE Facilities
 Kitchen, dining area, local tribal food on
 request, guides, trekking, bird
 watching, butterfly spotting,
 tribal visit

Facilities Kitchen, food on
 request, caretaker Reservations
 Tel 03778-200016
 Cell 09436042859 (DFO)

Upper Dekoroi Rest House

Location Inside the Forest, 12 kms
 from West Bank Forest Rest House
 Cell 09436093632 (Range Officer)
 Rooms 4 Tariff ₹400 Facilities
 Kitchen, food on request, caretaker
 Reservations Tel 03778-200016
 Cell 09436042859

FOREST RESTHOUSES

DAYING ERRING WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Forest Rest House

Location Near Asha Diagnostic
 Centre, Town Area, Pasighat
 Cell 09436621222 (RO), Cell
 09862624766 (DFO), Rooms 4
 Tariff ₹400-1,200 Facilities
 Kitchen, cook, food on request,
 attached bath

Forest Rest House Jeepghat

Location Jeepghat
 Cell 09862624766 (DFO) Rooms 4
 (single bedded) Tariff ₹250-300
 (approx.) Facilities Kitchen, cook,
 food on request, attached bath,
TIP: Reached by crossing the
 Siang River by forest department
 boats

EAGLENEST WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Ramalingam

Location Ramalingam, PO Tenga,
 Singchung, Shergaon Forest Division,
 West Kameng Tel 03782=232249 Cell
 09436246192 (DFO) Rooms 2 Tariff ₹500
 Facilities Kitchen, cook, dining hall

MOULING NATIONAL PARK

Forest Rest House

Location Ramsing Wildlife Range,
 Mouling Wildlife Division, Jengging Cell
 09436040109 (DFO) Rooms 4 Tariff
 ₹450-550 Facilities Kitchen, cook, dining
 hall, food on request, attached bath

NAMDAPHA NATIONAL PARK (DEBAN)

Eco Tourist Forest Guest House

Location Miao Cell 09436228763,

PAKKE TIGER RESERVE

Forest Inspection Bunglow

Location Inside the Forest, adjacent
 to West Bank Forest Rest
 House Cell 09436093632 (RO)
 Rooms 2, dorms 1 (6 bedded)
 Tariff ₹400, dorm bed ₹100
 Facilities Kitchen, caretaker, room
 service, attached bath
 Reservations Tel 03778-200016
 Cell 09436042859

Khari Forest Rest House

Location Inside the Forest, 12 kms
 from West Bank Forest Rest
 House Cell 09436093632 (RO)
 Rooms 4 Tariff ₹400 Credit Cards NA

West Bank Forest Rest House

Location Inside the Forest,
 Close to the Gate Cell 09436093632
 (Range Officer) Rooms 4 Tariff ₹400
 Credit Cards NA Facilities Kitchen,
 food on request, caretaker, room
 service, attached bath For Reservations
 DFO Tel 03778-200016 Cell
 09436042859

TALLE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Pange Camp

Location Lower Subansiri, Hapoli Tel
 03788-224277 Cell 09436040268
 (RFO), 09436047092 (DFO) Rooms 2
 Tariff ₹200 Facilities Kitchen, cook,
 food on request, attached bath

HOMESTAYS

BHALUKPONG**Bham Homestay**

Location Thembang Village, Dirang
Cell 08729930222, 09436635835
Rooms 2 Tariff ₹700 Facilities
 Kitchen, dining hall, room service,
 parking, geyser, heater, common bath

Dirkhipa Homestay

Location Thembang Village, Dirang
Cell 08729930222, 09436635835
Room 2 Tariff ₹700 Facilities Kitchen,
 dining hall, geyser, attached bath

Khaje Homestay

Location Thembang Village, Dirang
Cell 08729930222, 09436635835
Rooms 3 Tariff ₹1,000 Facilities
 Kitchen, dining hall, room service,
 parking, geyser, heater, attached bath

Yangdol Homestay

Location Jigaon Village, Rupa, West
 Kameng **Cell** 09402071593,
 09402928011 **Rooms 2 Tariff ₹1,000**
Facilities Kitchen, dining hall, room
 service, geyser, heater, attached bath

Yeshi Homestay

Location Tipi Village, Near Kameng
 River **Cell** 08415850764, 08731978022
Rooms 3 Tariff ₹1,300-1,600 Facili-
ties Kitchen, dining hall, room service

Yul Pema Chhen Homestay

Location Thembang Village, Dirang
Cell 08729930222, 09436635835

Rooms 2 ₹1,000 Facilities Kitchen,
 dining hall, parking, geyser, heater

NAMSAI**Greenview Homestay**

Location behind Higher Secondary,
 Namsai **Cell** 09436637187 **Rooms 2**
Tariff ₹3,000 with all meals **Facilities**
 Kitchen, vehicle for sightseeing

Hewli Homestay

Location Behind Buddhist Monastery,
 Namsai **Cell** 09862708997, 094360
 49977 **Rooms 3 Tariff ₹2,500** with two
 meals **Facilities** Kitchen, traditional
 cuisine, vehicles for sightseeing

Sangtini Homestay

Location Behind Buddhist Monastery,
 Namsai **Cell** 08794089075, 093666
 04048 **Rooms 2 Tariff ₹2,500-3,000**
Facilities Kitchen, parking, pic n drop,
 common bath

PASIGHAT**Ane Gumin Homestay**

Location Tigra Mirbu, Pasighat, East
 Siang **Cell** 07005059493, 087319
 91784 **Rooms 2 Tariff ₹1,600** per
 person, with two meals **Facilities**
 Kitchen, dining hall, common bath

K Gumin Homestay

Location Village Mebo, Romdum **Cell**
 09436053509, 08729989123 **Rooms 2**
Tariff ₹1,600 per person, with two
 meals **Facilities** Kitchen, dining hall,
 common bath

Nana Homestay

Location Village Takilalung, Pasighat
Cell 07085858003 **Rooms 2 Tariff**
 ₹1,800 per person, with two meals
Facilities Kitchen, common bath

Narmi Homestay

Location Runne Village, East Siang
Cell 09862911689 **Rooms 2 Tariff**
 ₹1,600 per person, with two meals
Facilities Kitchen, dining hall, room
 service, common bath

Takar Homestay

Location Tebo Village, East Siang, NH
 52 **Tel** 222324 **Cell** 09436043393,
 07005586217 **Rooms 4 Tariff ₹2,800-**
 3,000 **Facilities** Kitchen, dining room

Pineapple Homestay

Location Village Napit, Pasighat, East
 Siang **Cell** 09862571827

Tuniyang Homestay

Location Village Takilalung, Pasighat

ALONG STD 03783**Ori Home Stay**

Location Ori Village **Cell** 076389
 33767, 084248 02002 **Rooms 8 Tariff**
 ₹1,500 per person, with all meals
Facilities Kitchen, local guide, dining
 hall, room service, attached bath

ROING STD 03803**Dibang Valley Jungle Camp**

Location 12 km to Miuliati, Lower
 Dibang Valley **Tel** 0353-2433683 **Cell**

09733000442 [w](http://w.helptourism.net) helptourism.net
Rooms 4, tents 6 Tariff ₹5,000; TE
 with all meals, tents ₹3,500; TE with all
 meals **Facilities** Restaurant, laundry,
 room service, attached bath, TV

Zaktum Notko – Artist Camp

Location Lower Dibang Valley,
 Bomjir, 17km from Roing **Cell**
 08258829810, 09402054057 **Rooms 6**
 cottages **Tariff ₹2,500-3,500 Facilities**
 Kitchen, food on request, dining hall,
 attached bath

TIP Also called Dambuk Homestay

TAWANG STD 03794**Jambey Villa Home**

Location Urgelling (4 kms) **Cell**
 08414987117, 09436045988 **Rooms 6**
Tariff ₹1,800-3,000 Facilities Kitchen,
 food on request, dining hall, geyser,
 heater, attached bath

Lemberdung Home Stay

Location 8 km from Tawang Market
Cell 09436051009 **Rooms 3 Tariff**
 ₹1,500-2,000 **Facilities** Kitchen, food
 on request, dining hall, geyser, heaters,
 attached bath

ZIRO STD 03788**Ngunu Ziro**

Location Siro Village, Ziro (3 kms from
 main Ziro Town) **Cell** 09436047891,
 09856209494 **Rooms 2 Tariff ₹1,200-**
 2,000 per person, with two meals
Facilities Kitchen, dining hall, parking,
 geyser, heater, attached bath

Photo Credits

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