





India is filled with quirky experiences, and when Eric decided to explore the beauty of India, he clearly didn't expect to encounter this zany side of the country! He had to stop to capture the moment, where a family of 8 is being asked humbly by a traffic policeman to take care of their belongings and follow the rules!

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THE SUPERBIKE OF INDIA

Location: India



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“FIESTAS OF NORTHEAST”

If we go by a beautiful quote “We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open” and it is intriguing how true it is. The states in the Northeast India are some of the most fascinating and exciting places to travel in India. Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya are some of the places waiting to be explored.

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A destination is renowned in the hearts of tourist by its rich culture and traditions, and there is no better way to discover it than the festivals. The festivals of Northeast flaunt its rich culture and heritage as the heart-warming people gather to celebrate vibrant fiesta with exotic cuisine and unique costumes. Most of the festivals celebrated here are either related to flora or fauna, agriculture, religion or the beginning of a new year, and the celebrations include folk dances, soulful music & mouth watering delicacies. We have hand-picked some of the best festivals for you, which should be part of your itinerary to Northeast India.

Sangai Festival, Manipur

A world-class festival that celebrates the culture and tradition of Manipur, Sangai Festival is named after the State animal, Sangai, the brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur. Celebrated in the last week of November, the festival is a 10-day event, where you can find yourself amidst some classic folk dance performances, such as Kabui Naga dance, Bamboo dance, Maibi dance, Lai Haraoba dance, Khamba Thoibi dance, and more. **The exciting event takes place near Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating national park in the world.** If you plan to enjoy the festival, add a cherry on the cake and extend a few days to enjoy the ever-beautiful Hornbill festival of Nagaland in the first week of December.

Hornbill Festival, Nagaland

One of the most renowned as well as largest of Northeast India festivals, Nagaland’s Hornbill Festival promises an amazing insight into tribal of the state, their rhythmic dance moves, their upbeat music, delicious cuisine and even a rock concert! Almost 16 major tribes of Nagaland converge at Kisama Heritage Village, Kohima between 01st to 10th December every year to showcase their colourful culture and tenacity that defines them till date. The festival is named after the Indian hornbill, the large and colourful forest bird, which is displayed in the folklore of most of the state's tribes. For visitors it means a closer understanding of the people and culture of Nagaland. All the Naga tribes has its own traditions, cultures, folk songs, vibrant costumes and dances, and Hornbill Festival is one of the best to blend it all into a beautiful sight. With a unique aim to cherish and promote the richness, revive, protect and sustain the

Naga heritage and traditions, it is considered as one of the most important festival of Northeast. The 10 days are truly an experience in itself – especially the bonfire night on the last day.

The Aoling Festival, Nagaland

What makes Aoling an intriguing festival of Nagaland is the **Konyak Tribe!** Once deadly head-hunters, Konyak tribe now lives serenely and spends most of their time practising agriculture, drinking local alcohol, and smoking opium. After completing the sowing of seeds each year in April, the tribe celebrates their most important festival, **the Aoling Festival, which marks the beginning of the spring season and a new year.** If you plan to attend this festival, you can get a chance to visit where the Village Chief's house sits amidst the India-Burmese border. Discover other villages and get the opportunity to meet the elders of the village who have majestic tattoos on their faces and torso, and wear animal hair and skin and headdress.

Dree Festival, Arunachal Pradesh

The vibrant festival of the **Apatani Tribe, Dree Festival** is celebrated every year on **July 5 in Ziro Valley.** It is one of the most tranquil carnivals in Arunachal Pradesh, as it evokes spirituality and is also marked by extensive merrymaking. From worshipping the Gods to performing alluring traditional dances, brewing local drinks and preparing delicious delicacies, Dree Festival is just the perfect summer celebration bringing the otherwise quite lands of the verdant Ziro valley to life.

Wangala Festival, Meghalaya

The biggest harvest festival of the **Garo tribe in Meghalaya**, the Wangala Festival is **held in honour of the Sun God of fertility.** The lively carnival is celebrated every second week of November to mark the end of the sowing season and agricultural year. The highlight of the festival is the sound of 100 drums, blowing horns, and traditional dancing that will exhilarate you! To have an experience you can also participate in other attractions like traditional dance competition, slow-cooking competition, indigenous games, and handloom and handicrafts exhibition.

Wild Mahseer - Where History is Your Host

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Serenely tucked in the Brahmaputra valley and nurtured by the local communities of the Eastern Himalayas, Wild Mahseer is an elusive natural and cultural paradise located 25km away from Tezpur. Wild Mahseer Lodge is a gateway to the forests of Pakke, Kaziranga, Nameri and Orang. A bio-diverse Ark of 1, 00,000+ plants, 75+ species of birds and 72+ species of butterflies, the property is also imbued in history on a 22-acre land. It comprises of the Burra (visiting agent's) Bungalow (3 rooms), a mute spectator of the tea heritage that allows visitors to immerse in the nostalgia of the colonial lifestyle. Along with an additional four cozy tea bungalows (17 rooms), the First Flush dining pavilion and Two & A Bud conference facility is all located on a certified organic property.

Highlight Includes:

- Experience 145 years of cultural inheritance and 1000 years of environmental heritage
- Soak in the serenity of the place as you stay in one of the cozy Bungalows
- Savor local delicacies at an ethnic cuisine kitchen in the midst of our green estate which is named as the "Bhela Ghar".
- Being a sustainable property, Bhela Ghar is a temporary night shelter, used as a community feast hall, made of thatch, bamboo, straws.
- Have an exceptional dining experience at First Flush Dining Hall, which was once a garage for tractors and has been converted to a 28- seats world class dining space paneled with French Doors embedded with glass to let sunlight through!

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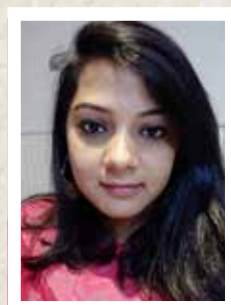
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KANIKA CHOPRA

An Ode to Northeast India

An old and enlightening quote by **Ibn Battuta** says “Travel leaves you speechless and then turns you into a storyteller”, and a trip to **Northeast India** will make you a profound storyteller! Made up of seven separate but adjoining states famously called as Seven Sister States, Northeast India’s beguiling tribal culture, surreal UNESCO sites, Asia’ cleanest village, the unique living root bridges, colourful monasteries echoing with chants, and the misty mountains can captivate anyone with its unmatched beauty.

An offbeat destination in itself, the Northeast is best explored by road! The essence of North Eastern states of India like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, collectively lies in its tribal culture, handicrafts and the unique wildlife parks. *Home to some of the most colourful and cheerful people, the North-eastern part of India is also quite an ethnically diverse region. The epicentre of many diverse communities, cultures and faiths, the Northeast truly epitomizes the Indian ethos of “Unity in Diversity”. The states, its tribes, the culture, cuisines, handicrafts, and the unique flora & fauna make Northeast one of the coveted destinations for travellers who crave and seek adventure, excitement and diversity! So, if you’ve travelled across India but have never visited the Northeast, here are the reasons to do so.*

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Tribes of Northeast India

Northeast India is unparalleled in the world when it comes to isolation and diversity of its tribes and their unique culture. The states in the Northeast are home to a unique tribal culture that remains unchanged for centuries. As you explore the tribes and the places, you will realise how different is this intriguing pocket of India - **ethnically, culturally and geographically and it is indeed beautiful**. Each tribe is known for their eccentric feature, such as **Bodo Tribe** is a heroic tribe of Assam, who is said to have invented the rice cultivation, tea plantations poultry farms in the region. Popular for their



artworks which are famous all over the country, the **Angami Tribe of Nagaland** is one of the major tribal communities that defines the unique culture of Northeast India. One of the renowned tribes is **the Konyak**, the last remaining head-hunter clans of Northeast region. Konyak Tribe were once known for decapitating their enemies and proudly displaying them on their return to the village. With time, these old customs are silently disappearing,

but what the **Konyak tribe** teach us is that there’s a wealth of cultural experiences hidden within the mystical hills of Northeast India. It is fascinating to know that some of the tribes here are actively helping in environment conversation such as the **Bugun tribe** in Arunachal Pradesh, who also bagged the 2018 India Biodiversity Awards in recognition for conservation of wild species.

Handicrafts of Northeast India

It is only natural that with numerous distinctive tribes, the region is filled with marvellous handicrafts. Northeast India has a large number of tribes and each of them has a rich handicraft tradition of their own. **Bamboo works**, especially, are widespread and Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura have very skilled bamboo craftsmen who make majestic screens, lamp stands, furniture and baskets among many other things. In addition, **Manipur is well-known for gold plated jewellery, Assam and Meghalaya for their silk textiles etc. The beautiful art of Pottery is also a commonly practised craft in some places here.**

Nature and Wildlife

North East India has got a very diverse flora and fauna. The national parks of Northeast are different from any you will explore in the rest of the country or probably the world. It is home to two of the world's largest biodiversity hotspots, **Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary and Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh**, which is known to regulate Northeast India’s weather. **Namdapha National Park** is also one of the last remaining of the few large evergreen forests in the world and the only National Park in the world where the **four big cats- tiger, leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard are found**. The region is also home to the enchanting UNESCO World Heritage site, **Kaziranga National Park** in Assam that houses

two-thirds of the world's one-horned rhinoceros population. Take an adventurous safari here and besides Rhinos, meet elephants, Asiatic wild water buffaloes, swamp deer, Barking deer, the more recently sited Golden Tiger and around 400 species of birds. One another extraordinary park in this region is the **Nameri National Park** of Assam that lets you explore the wildlife in its natural habitat. It is a tiger and a bison country & is famous for its sizeable population of the very rare White-winged



Wood Duck. It is one of the very few national parks in India, where vehicles are not allowed. **An exciting trek of around 20km a day or rafting down the Jia Bhorali River, with two forest rangers will take you deep in the forest to explore the best of wildlife and birdlife**. It is also an experience of a lifetime to take a trip to the **Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary**, an isolated wildlife forest surrounded by Brahmaputra River on one side and with tea plantations everywhere else, it is home to the only ape found in India the **Hoolock Gibbon**. Don’t forget to take a trip to **Keibul Lamjao National Park, Imphal’s only floating national park in the world** located in Manipur and is a vital part of Loktak Lake.

Himachal Pradesh and Odisha looks to develop eco-tourism



Himachal Pradesh is keen to explore eco-tourism opportunities and is looking to develop destinations for the same. The state forest minister, Rakesh Pathania, presided over a meeting of the forest department to explore the possibilities of eco-tourism and also discussed the development of necessary facilities to promote the state as an eco-tourism destination.

The state intends to promote eco-tourism through the online medium to ensure that they can reach out to the maximum number of people and help create awareness about various forest tourism sites of the state. The forest minister said that tents would also be set up near forest rest houses in remote areas to promote eco-tourism and added that the state would explore possibilities of setting up camping villages and also work towards developing them from a tourism point of view.

The department would also help create opportunities for various activities such as bird watching and trekking at these destinations and through the involvement of the local community would help to strengthen the local economy and make the whole exercise a sustainable one.

Odisha tourism is planning to promote ecotourism after COVID-19. The Forest and Environment department's wildlife wing has collaborated with Odisha Tourism to train community members so as to open up ecotourism sites in the state. The Odisha government is looking at the future post COVID-19, and looking at ways to make tourism safer during this pandemic.

Already, the tourism department and the Forest and Environment department's wildlife wing have come together to train managers and community members in 40 ecotourism sites. Among the 40 ecotourism destinations, you have beach resorts, hill stations in tribal areas, forests, and nature camps. Around 600 community members manage 300 rooms in such locations, and this can be very fruitful for tourism in the state.

All ecotourism locations, such as nature camps and others will be well equipped with sanitisation products, and more.

Nepal to resume international flights from Sep 1



The Nepal government has decided to resume international flights from September 1 after nearly six months, a Cabinet Minister said.

Nepal had suspended international flights on March 22 in an effort to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, reports Xinhua news agency.

The country had earlier planned to resume the services from August 17, but it was extended till August 31 amid the resurgence of coronavirus cases. In a press meet, Minister for Finance and Communication Yubaraj Khatriwada said: "The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation will publish the table of flight schedules starting from September 1."

Certain restrictions would be imposed on scheduled flights to allowing flights only from limited countries and regions and for limited Nepali and foreign nationals.

India Tourism Mart (ITM) to be held virtually in November 2020



Hony. General Secretary, FAITH has suggested that India Tourism Mart (ITM) will be held by the end of November 2020. "This

will help in promoting India to the tour operators all over the world. Last two years, we had 250 buyers, this year in the virtual mart we hope to interact with more than 500 leading travel agents and tour operators from all over the world," he said.

FAITH also suggested for better coordination an Inter-Ministerial Task Force be formed chaired by the Tourism Minister consisting of mainly with Tourism, Civil Aviation, Commerce, Home, & External Affairs & Railways along with the members of the tourism industry.

Vistara likely to start flights from India to UK, Germany, France



Private carrier Vistara is likely to start flight operations between India and the UK, Germany and France under the bilateral air

bubble arrangements that have been signed with these countries, sources in the aviation industry said on Sunday. Earlier this month, India and the UK signed a bilateral air pact, under which the airlines of both the countries can operate international flights with certain restrictions. India had signed similar bilateral pacts with Germany and France in July.

Vistara got its second B787-9 wide-body aircraft on Saturday. It had received its first B787-9 aircraft in February. "Vistara has already got the slots at the Heathrow airport in London. The flights between Delhi and London are likely to be announced in the next few days," an industry source said. The Delhi-London flight is likely to operate thrice a week, the source added.

A wide-body aircraft has a bigger fuel tank that allows it to operate long-haul flights. Vistara has 43 planes in its fleet, of which 41 are narrow-body aircraft like A320neo and B737-800NG.

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India's longest river ropeway service launched in Guwahati



India's longest river ropeway of 1.82 km connecting Guwahati and North Guwahati over the Brahmaputra River in Assam was

inaugurated on 24 August. It is expected to boost tourism in the region.

The ropeway will cross the Urvashi Island and the commuters will catch a glimpse of the Umananda Temple on Peacock Island, built by Ahom King Gadadhar Singha. Launching the ropeway service, Assam Health, Finance and Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that generally ropeway is built in the mountainous areas, but the Guwahati ropeway is the first ropeway in India over a river.

Consisting of two cabins with each having a capacity of 32 passengers at a time, the ropeway, however, given the Covid-19 protocol, will for the time being only carry 15 people, said the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA), which executed the project.

"It is ecologically sustainable as it is run by electric power protecting the beauty of the area, while simultaneously providing passengers with a comfortable and speedy means of travel," an official statement said.

78 additional routes to be awarded under regional connectivity scheme Udan



A total of 78 additional routes will be awarded under the fourth round of regional connectivity scheme Udan, Civil Aviation

Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on 25 August. Under the Udan scheme, financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and underserved airports, and keep airfares affordable.

Puri said on Twitter, "UDAN 4.0 is ready to go. Seventy-eight additional routes have now been approved, taking the total number of sanctioned routes to 766." "Eighteen unserved/underserved airports would be connected to metro cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Kochi, etc," he added.

At least half of the seats in Udan flights are offered at subsidized fares, and the participating carriers are provided a certain amount of viability gap funding (VGF) - an amount shared between the Centre and the state concerned.

The minister said the aforementioned 78 "unique" routes have been "finalized for award" and it will cause "approximately monthly VGF outflow of Rs 15 crores". Puri said, "The economic and tourism opportunities that these flights will offer to the regions will contribute towards the making of an Atmanirbhar Bharat."

India enters Unlock 4.0



The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued new guidelines 29th August 2020, for opening up of more activities in areas outside the Containment Zones. In Unlock 4, which will come into effect from September 1, 2020, the process of phased re-opening of activities has been extended further. The new guidelines, issued 29 August, are based on feedback received from States and UTs, and extensive consultations held with related Central Ministries and Departments.

Here is what is allowed in Unlock 4:

- 1) Metro rail will be allowed to operate from September 7 in a graded manner.
- 2) No restrictions on inter-state and intra-state movement of people and goods.
- 3) No separate permission or e-permits will be required.
- 4) Social/academic/sports/entertainment/cultural/religious/ political functions & other congregations will be permitted with a ceiling of 100 persons, from 21 September.
- 5) Open air theatres will be permitted to open with effect from September 21.
- 7) Only essential services will be allowed in containment zones.
- 8) Lockdown will continue in the containment zones till September 30.

Here is what remains closed in Unlock 4

- 1) Schools, colleges, educational and coaching institutions will continue to remain closed for students.
- 2) Cinema halls, swimming pools, entertainment parks, theatres will continue to remain closed.
- 3) International air travel, except as permitted by MHA, to remain suspended.
- 4) Persons above 65 years of age, persons with co-morbidities, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 years, are advised to stay at home, except for meeting essential requirements and for health purposes.

Srinagar wins bid for 2021 Skål Asia Congress

Srinagar, the capital city of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) has won the bid to host the 2021 Skål International Asia Area Congress to be held between April 8 and 11 in 2021. International delegates from 44 Skål clubs from 18 Asian countries are expected to attend the Congress. Skål is a professional organization of tourism leaders around the world, promoting global tourism and friendship. The bidding for the 2021 Congress was held at the Virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Skål. Although Skål Delhi was in contention for the 2021 Congress, they decided to withdraw from the bidding in favor of Srinagar. Srinagar won the bid against a strong bidding by Bahrain. The 49th Skål Asia Congress 2020 couldn't be organized in Phuket in Thailand due to the global pandemic. In Asia, India has the highest number of Skål Clubs, 18, with 1400 members cutting across hotels, aviation, travel and tourism operators.

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Dear Partners,

As an ever-evolving nation, India seems to be at the peak of new ideas and innovative solutions in the tourism world. From fresh itineraries, eco-tourism focus and rural initiatives, there are a number of new and interesting ideas to explore here. One such destination that offers numerous possibilities to explore something fascinating at every corner is Northeast India! When I think about my experience with North-eastern parts of India, I can imagine the bright blues skies, like pats of butter melting over pitched roofs and treetops of Gangtok, Sikkim. The mythical Shangri-Las wedged between Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. A place where ex- Chogyals (kings) and Gyalmos (queens) are in the morning paper as a living god and the 17th Karmapa, waits to take his seat at Rumtek. Here, the clocks are indulgent and the maps are superfluous. It was in 2004 that Sikkim embarked upon a journey to become a fully organic state and finally it managed to get this ambitious feat 12 years later. Since then, the least populous and second smallest state of India surrounded by the mighty Himalayas, has become a shining jewel in India’s crown. There are many rural villages in Sikkim where travellers are welcome to experience hands-on organic farming while living with the locals in their humble homestays and it is by far one of the best homestay experiences in Northeast India. Lachung, Lachen, Denchung and Kaluk are some of the popular villages you can visit.



With India, the possible itinerary options are endless, so we have developed some exciting small group and private tailor-made tours focusing on what we consider the real and the raw highlights of the region. Let me tell you about **“Culture and Serenity of Northeast”**. We will take you to **Dibrugarh** on your first day, explore the beautiful tea estates of Dibrugarh and spend 3 days at the exclusive heritage accommodation surrounded by lush landscapes. Next, head to **Wakro**, the homeland of the “Mishmis” one of the Mongolian tribes of Tibeto-Burman origin, Chakma tribe and many more. It is an experience to get an insight into the artistic taste and the cultural thinking of this society. A 3 day stay at Wakro will not only let you explore the “Little Burma” in Assam, but it will also give you a chance to unwind amidst the nature as you take a plunge into their unique culture. If you want to quench your adventure thirst, you can choose to add to traverse through **Namdapha National Park** by trekking for 3-5 days. Later, return to Dibrugarh and depart for your onward journey. **It is always great to have options! Take a look at another adventure that you can take in the Northeast.** Let me introduce you to **“North Eastern Magic”**. We will take you to Dibrugarh on your first day, the gateway to the “Hidden Land” of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Myanmar. Explore the **Dibru Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary**, settled by the Brahmaputra River. The sprawling sanctuary is one of the best places in Assam for birdwatchers. After thoroughly exploring the wildlife and nature of this ever-beautiful sanctuary, we will move to Jorhat. Next day, drive to **Nagaland**, renowned for the Hornbill Festival. It is an experience to get an insight into the artistic taste and the cultural thinking of the Naga tribes. After spending a couple of days in Nagaland, drive to the majestic **Majuli Island**. Visit the monasteries and interface with the tribes on the island, and I assure you that it will be a delightful experience for you.



Next, we will take you to the charming **Kaziranga Nationa Park**, known for its elusive one-horned Rhinos. Next, spend a few days in **Nameri National Park**, a deciduous forests with the river Jia Bhorali flowing by its side and is one of the very few national parks that are accessible only by a trek. Next, we will explore the best of Arunachal Pradesh. We will drive to Dirang, Steeped in scenic beauty. This town is situated in the valley of river Kameng. Crossing Sela Pass, we will drive to Tawang. Known as the ‘Land of the Rising Sun’, Arunachal Pradesh is the easternmost state of India. The awe-inspiring natural landscapes of the state are dotted with several seminal Buddhist monasteries and most important of them all is the Tawang Monastery, founded in 1680, and is be the largest monastery in India. As you reach Tawang, explore the awe-inspiring landscapes, local Mompa Tribal villages, and the alluring Tawang monastery that is the home to 500 monks and is the centre of Mahayana Buddhism. When at Tawang, do indulge in some warm cups of coffee at the Dharma Coffee House and Library. The next day, drive to Bomdila and stay the night! The next morning, return to Guwahati via the new road from Bomdila that has made everything so smooth, and then depart for your onward journey with amazing memories.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE
of THE MONTH!



Rajesh Sharma | General Manager Accounts

Rajesh’s journey with Indo Asia Tours started 11 years ago. A brilliant chartered accountant with a working experience of 20 years, Rajesh also completed his LLB in the year 2015. A fitness enthusiast, he is also very fond of badminton. His love for his 5 year old son takes precedence over everything else. His many qualities make Rajesh an important asset for us. Kudos to him for his achievements.

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