

The best of Meghalaya



Pocket MEGHALAYA

Pocket MEGHALAYA

SIGHTS • CULTURE • ACTIVITIES

All you need to know about Meghalaya

- Top 10 attractions
- Options for stay, food and adventure
- Tips for planning the trip
- Local life, cuisine and culture

WHY YOU CAN TRUST US...

Our job is to make amazing travel experiences happen. We visit the places we write about each and every edition. We never take freebies for positive coverage, so you can always rely on us to tell it like it is.

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Pocket
Meghalaya

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Plan Your Trip

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Dawn breaks over Dawki, a border town in the Jaintia Hills region

Need To Know



Cherrapunjee gets its major rainfall from June to September

WHEN TO GO

Meghalaya is an all-year destination with different highlights at different periods.

Oct–Mar Ideal for adventure activities like caving and hiking without the fear of excessive rains, this is also the best period to see the crystal clear waters of Umngot River at Dawki and Shnongpdeng, and visit the Wangala Drum Festival.

Apr–May This relatively warmer period sometimes features pre-monsoon showers, but the weather is pleasant and still an option to beat the heat of the plains.

Jun–Sep Owing to heavy rainfall at this time, the waterfalls are swollen and come thundering down in their full glory. The misty monsoons are much celebrated in Meghalaya.

Quick Facts

- **Languages:** Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, English and Hindi
- **Money:** ATMs of both nationalised and private banks are available in Shillong, Cherrapunjee, Tura and Jowai. Apart from the major towns, there are not too many ATMs. Keep cash handy and check for card usage in hotels before booking.
- **Internet Access:** Wi-fi is mostly available at hotels in Shillong, but one cannot be too sure of the signal strength. In some cases, it may be available only in the lobby area or if paid for. Other parts of Meghalaya have unreliable internet, depending on where you are.
- **Phone Connectivity:** All major networks work efficiently in Shillong, but the connectivity can be unreliable in other parts of the state when you're on the road.

Tourist Information: Contact MTDC (Meghalaya Tourism Development Corporation) ☎364 2226220; Police Bazaar, opp MTC Bus Stand, Shillong; 7.30am–7pm. You can book taxis and government-run hotels from here.

The Directorate of Tourism:

☎364 2502580; www.megtourism.gov.in; 3rd Secretariat Nokrek Building, Lower Lachumiere, Shillong; 10am–5pm (Mon–Fri).

Price Ranges

Throughout this book, reviews use the following price ranges. Rates quoted do not include seasonal pricing or taxes, unless otherwise specified.

Key to Rates

Accommodation & Eating

₹₹₹	over ₹7000
₹₹	₹3000–7000
₹	below ₹3000
₹₹₹	over ₹500
₹₹	₹200–500
₹	below ₹200

Abbreviations

s	single rooms
d	double rooms
ste	suites

FIRST TIME IN MEGHALAYA

Carved out from the state of Assam in 1972, bound by Assam (north and east) and Bangladesh (south and west), and featuring three distinct hill regions with namesake tribes – Khasi, Jaintia and Garo (further divided into 11 districts), Meghalaya is one of India's smallest states. Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram are statistically among the wettest places on Earth; most of the rain falls between June and September, creating impressive waterfalls and carving out some of Asia's longest caves.

This soccer-loving state has a rich bounty of tropical fruits and spices, especially pineapple, areca, turmeric, honey, bay leaves, cinnamon and jackfruit. The state celebrated its first Cherry Blossom Festival in November 2016, when the pinks and whites of the cherry trees burst into flowers.

ADVANCE PLANNING

Flight or train tickets to Guwahati, the main gateway to Meghalaya, should be economical, if booked early. Cherrapunjee can be packed with tourists in the heavy season. Book ahead as there is limited accommodation there. Shillong, on the other hand, has plenty of options.

WHAT TO PACK

Pack light cotton clothes that dry easily, a roll-up raincoat, an umbrella and shoes or open sandals with a good grip to withstand the rain. Since the evenings can get chilly, woollen layers are recommended for the winter months and a light jacket for the summer and monsoons.

TRAVELLING ALONE

In this hilly terrain in the Northeast, everything winds up pretty soon in the day. Shillong is safe even as late as 11pm when the restaurants shut down. Cabs are safe and available to take you around. Cherrapunjee packs up by 6pm, and other parts of the state even earlier. Travelling alone is not unsafe, but the Garo Hills region needs special attention, when locals advise you to not step out post sunset.

Pack light for treks and hiking up the hills



✓ Top Tip: Exploring the state

Meghalaya is clearly divided into three main regions – Garo Hills, central Khasi Hills and the eastern-most Jaintia Hills. Both East and West Khasi Hills and West Jaintia Hills have larger clusters of tourist interest and better infrastructure. Even though the entire state is ideal for outdoor adventure, the middle part, along Shillong and Sohra (Cherrapunjee) is well-equipped and gets the maximum footfall.

Keep Tura (in the heart of Garo Hills) as the base to discover the northern, eastern and western parts of Garo. For the southern (and least explored) region (Balpakram National Park and around), stay in the closest town, Baghmara.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air: Two airports lie closest to Shillong, the capital – Guwahati's Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (114km) and Umroi (30km). Direct Air India flights from Kolkata to Umroi operate every day. Since there is limited connectivity to Umroi, most travellers rely on the Guwahati airport for connections from all major Indian cities and a wider choice of air carriers.

A helicopter service (p57) for Guwahati–Shillong (20min)–Tura (60min) operates on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Limited seating and weather dependency make it an unpopular choice.

📍364 2223129: Meghalaya Tourism Centre, Police Bazaar, Shillong

Rail: Guwahati is the closest railhead to Shillong (103km) and a large part of the Northeast. Some of the new trains ply from the second railway station of the city, Kamakhya (106km).

Cabs to Shillong are available from the airport and railway station (non AC/ AC ₹2000/₹2500). The prices are higher for Cherrapunjee and Tura, the two other major travel destinations. Uber cabs are also available to Shillong and cost a couple of hundred or so less, depending on the destination.

Road: Guwahati to Shillong is by NH40. The other major highway, NH44, swings towards Tripura and Mizoram. SH5, NH106 and NH206 connect to the tourist zones from Shillong. The MTC (Meghalaya Transport Corporation) and ASTC (Assam State Transport Corporation) booking counters are at Police Bazaar in Shillong. Regular buses ply to Guwahati and major towns of Meghalaya from here.

This is Meghalaya

Hilly Meghalaya – the ‘abode of clouds’ – is a cool, pine-fresh mountain state set on dramatic horseshoe formations of rocky cliffs. Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram are among the wettest places in the world; the heavy rainfall has created the region’s key natural attractions – its plethora of waterfalls and caves.

HISTORY

Meghalaya attained full statehood in 1972. While this was the most significant event in the modern history of the state, the 19th century was marked by other events – the kingdoms of Jaintia (p60), Khasi (p44) and Garo Hills (p56) were governed by the British. This was also the time when Welsh missionaries made their way to the state, introducing Christianity to the mix of tribal culture (p30, 48). Scholars believe that the Mon-Khmers were one of the first groups of people to settle in the Indian subcontinent.

Meghalaya lives up to its name with evocative panoramas of floating clouds

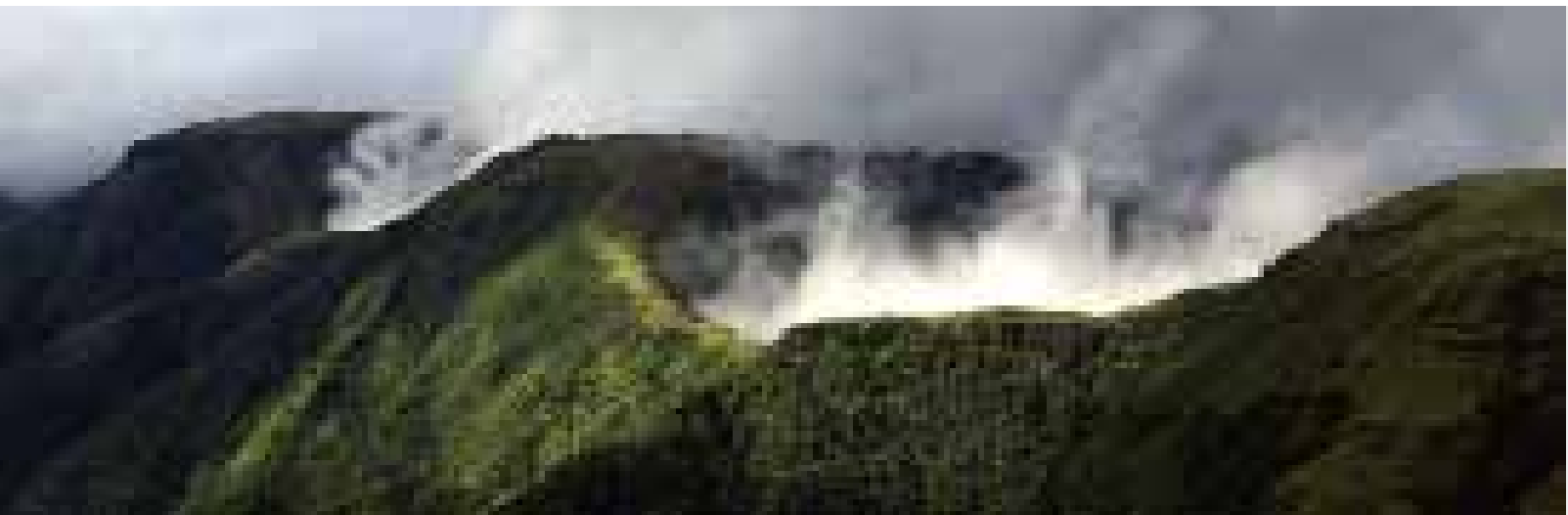
Elements of the Neolithic era are still seen in the state. A vast number of megaliths scattered over the Khasi and Jaintia regions also make this a region of interest for geologists and historians.

NATURE

Meghalaya is crafted for experiencing the authentic, raw and untrodden, rugged outdoors. Where else can you walk through a network of caves (p22, 35, 59), traverse bridges made from tree roots (p49), peep down at near-transparent rivers (p62), and witness an outstanding play of rain-clouds that feed hundreds of waterfalls. Meghalaya also has wildlife reserves, extended pine forests and mountainscapes that are home to an abundance of exotic flora and fauna such as rare orchids, the red panda, the hoolock gibbon and the peacock pheasant (p58).

CULTURE & FESTIVALS

Seasons, tribal rites and modern signposts are marked with colourful festivals that bring culture and local celebrations to the fore in Meghalaya. In the Khasi region (p44) the Ranikor River Beach Festival (Feb) celebrates the vibrant outdoors of the state. Boating in the Kynshi River, rafting up to the Rilang, snorkelling, and scuba diving are part of the celebrations. The three-day Monolith Festival (Mar) is held at the Khasi Heritage Village, Mawphlang





(p34). In Shillong (p26), check out the Weiking Dance Festival (Apr) where women and men celebrate dressed in traditional costumes. The Autumn Festival (Oct/Nov) when the city comes alive with fashion, food and music; the four-day Cherry Blossom Festival (Nov); and the Wine Festival (Nov) are colourful events.

Garos (p56) celebrate the 100 Drums Wangala Dance Harvest Festival (Nov) and the Willian Nagar Winter Festival and Dimchrang Winter Festival (Dec). The three-day South Garo festival at Ampati celebrates the indigenous culture with local dance, music and theatre. The Baghmara Winter Festival, which is a south Garo Tsyam festival, is celebrated on the banks of the River Simsang. The Discover Jaintia Festival (Nov/Dec) and the Tura Winter Festival and pre-Christmas cultural extravaganza held at the Dikki Bandi Stadium in Tura are also fun experiences to catch up on local culture.

The vibrant Khasi festival of Shad Suk Mysiem is held in Shillong

CUISINE

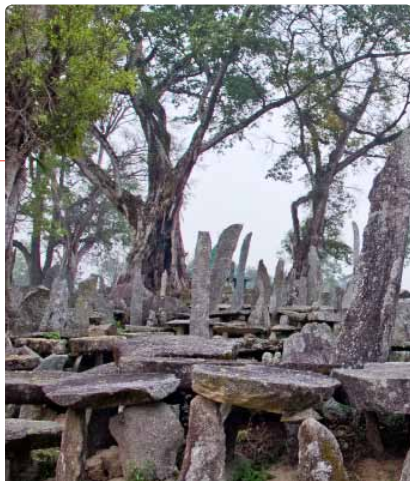
Cuisine in Meghalaya (p55) revolves around meat (especially pork), rice and other staples like bamboo and sesame. Contrary to popular belief, vegetarian food is found easily in the state. The easiest way to get acquainted with the local cuisine is by eating at a Jadoh (rice-curry combination) stall (p40). Doh khleh (meat with onions) stews usually made with tyroso (mustard leaves), jhur sdieh (mixed fried vegetables) and tungtap (dried fish chutney) or tungrymbai (chutney made from fermented soya bean and black sesame seed paste) are part of the regular fare. Locals recommend some staples including dohneiiong (pork with black sesame seed), ja stem (rice and turmeric), ja snam (rice with chicken or pig blood) and doh kha sdieh (Assamese styled fish).

10 Top Experiences



1 NOHKALIKAI WATERFALL

One of the outstanding natural wonders of Meghalaya is the Nohkalikai Waterfall (p46) in Cherrapunjee, tumbling over a rock bed, foaming furiously to leap down hurriedly to the bottom. It cascades 1115 feet down to an emerald plunge pool, leaving a misty haze in its wake. The tallest waterfall in India, it attracts swarms of travellers from all over the world. This majestic landmark truly exemplifies the meaning of 'natural beauty' and is likely to be the centrepiece of your travel to Meghalaya.



2 NARTIANG MONOLITHS

Harking back in history are the hundreds of grey stone monoliths scattered in a large enclosure in the Jaintia Hills (p60). These are generally off the radar for tourists. The Nartiang monoliths (p63) were erected, some time in AD 1500–1800, during the reign of the Jaintia kings. Many

vertical menhirs and horizontal slabs representing the male and female forms, commemorate different people and occasions. What is spectacular is the size and shape of these single stone structures, which must have been extremely difficult to erect. Since not many travellers set foot here, the atmosphere is slightly grim; you half expect a disembodied voice to narrate the history of the menhirs!



3 DOUBLE DECKER BRIDGE

The most fascinating sights around Cherrapunjee (p44) are the incredible root bridges (p49) – living rubber fig-tree roots that ingenious Khasi villagers have, over decades, trained across streams to form natural pathways. The roots are braided together to form a solid bridge over rivers. The method is hundreds of years old, and it takes almost 40 years to form a complete bridge. Three of these root bridges, including the amazing 'double-decker' are near Nongriat (p49). The much-celebrated bridge is fast becoming the postcard image for Meghalaya, and has helped in increasing footfall to the region. Access to the Double Decker Bridge is through the pretty village of Tyrna (p48), 2km from Mawshamok. The round trip into the canyon where these root bridges stand is an eight-hour slog from Tyrna, involving a 2000-step ascent and descent through very steep terrain.



4 RAINBOW FALLS

If you could custom build a waterfall – complete with a white frothy curtain, bright blue sky with a rainbow as a backdrop, and a mint aqua pool for it to pour into – it would resemble the Rainbow Falls located in Tyrna (p49). The streams that feed it come gurgling from the high mountains, eventually making a single curtain of water and most often a rainbow in the foreground. Not many travellers make it here, so the remoteness adds to the splendour. The trek to the waterfall is just as beautiful; one walks through the forested chasm, balancing over flimsy suspension bridges and steep muddy trails. Finding one's way through the musty smell of leaf-litter as shafts of sunlight paint the damp earth is part of the magic.

5 DAWKI AND SHNONGPDENG

The photoshop-defying beauty of the Umgot River, that passes through Dawki (p62) and Shnongpdeng (p62), has made curious photographers trek to the southern-most parts of Meghalaya. The glass-like river is best enjoyed from a local dinghy, as you peer down to the bottom of the river bed and spot a colourful palette of rocks and fish. The idyllic circuit of waterfalls, forests and living root bridges is not complete until you visit Dawki and Shnongpdeng.



6 JADOH STALLS

Locals and curious visitors are permanent fixtures at the rice and curry joints in Shillong, locally known as Jadoh stalls (p40). The typical ethos of these largely women-run stalls is a dimly lit room with narrow tables and benches, where dishes made from local ingredients and recipes are slammed swiftly on the table. Slurping soupy dishes or chewing the fatty pieces of pork is the only agenda at these budget joints.

7 LAITLUM CANYON

The beauty of the crumpled-duvet landscapes and the honey-coloured plateau got Bollywood biggies trundling down to Meghalaya. Thanks to the movie, *Rock On 2*, this previously overlooked gem can expect a fair stomp of trekking boots in the coming years. Visiting Laitlum Canyon (p32) is completely worthwhile, if you take out time to leg the faint path along the steep ravines that takes you to the Rasong village at the bottom of the canyon. Hewn out of the mountain, this is a stairway 'down' to heaven. Look up at the towering escarpment to get a complete sense of how small a peg you are on nature's vast map.



8 TEER

It's hard to shake off the image of at least 50 men tugging at a rudimentary arrow balancing on the sharp wire of a bow and letting it zip through the air right into the heart of a hay target. This exact action is repeated at least 30 times and yet everyone's gaze remains transfixed on the target until an hour has passed. Teer (p33) is a traditional form of gambling with archery, a daily affair in Shillong. It sees a churn of thousands of rupees each day. No wonder the locals love it so much.



9 CAVING IN MEGHALAYA

The reputation of the network of caves (p22, 35, 59) that exist in Meghalaya cannot even come close to the actual sight. Pull on your boots and enjoy the underground adventure with experts. Gobsmaacking stalagmites and stalactites – some jagged, some downright gorgeous – all add up to make a



sensational setting. The activity can be customised for beginners as well as seasoned cavers. Don't miss the Siju Caves (p59) of the Garo region.

10 ZIP LINING

Tourism has soared in Cherrapunjee (p44), thanks to its majestic miles of greenery and waterfalls. Add the thrill of zip lining (p22) on one of the highest lines in India, and you have an unparalleled tryst with adventure. This is an aerial escapade made for thrill-seekers who are ready to push fears aside and take a swift passage through the clouds, gliding across the valley. Imagine the unimpeded views that you're likely to get from this vantage sweep of hills and valleys.



Meghalaya in a Week

A week may seem too little a time in Meghalaya, but make the best of seven days with experiences that give you a fair orientation of the state and see its major attractions. In this trip, you travel along the spine – Shillong–Sohra – in the Khasi Hills, and also swing by a small portion of the Jaintia Hills.

DAY 1

Travel to Shillong via Guwahati. Drive past Umiam Lake (p28) to enter the city. Spend the early evening exploring the local markets – Police Bazaar and Bara Bazaar. Step into Trattoria, a Jadoh stall, for a quick bite of local food and spend the evening at the hip Cloud 9 (p42) – gig or not.

DAY 2

After stopping by at the Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures (p29), drive to Laitlum Canyon (p32) via Smit village. If you plan to hike down to Rasong (even midway will do), it will take you until late afternoon. Back in Shillong, have dinner at Cafe Shillong (p40).

Make camping a part of your travels to the state



DAY 3

Drive to Upper Shillong and, after breakfast at ML05 (p41), make a quick stop at Elephant Falls and continue to Mawphlang. A walk in the sacred grove and a short walk along the David Scott Trail (p34) can be the plan for the day. Stay at MaplePine Farm (p35) for the night or return to Shillong.

DAY 4

Leave early to hit Sohra (p44) where you can start the day with zip lining at the Mawdok Valley. Drive to Nohkalikai Falls (p46) and halt at the Mawmai Caves (p47). Try and stay near the Seven Sisters Falls.

DAY 5

Be prepared for an action-packed day. Leave very early for Tyrna, to hike to the Double Decker living root bridge and Rainbow Falls (p49). The 6km trek takes upto 8 hours.

DAY 6

Reserve this day for Shnongpdeng (p62) in the Jaintia Hills (p60). Camp on the sandy banks of the river to soothe your weary legs from the trek.

DAY 7

On the last day, return to Shillong via the Krang Suri Waterfalls (p62) and the Nartiang Monoliths (p63).

✓ Top Tip: Short trips with Campfire Trails

Use Shillong as your base for these trips.

- **Mawlyngbna, 74km:** Located south of Mawsynram, stay at Traveller's Nest (☎9615170025). Explore the sea urchin fossil park and fishing spots like Um Diengkain and Ar Phalat; go kayaking, cycling, hiking.
- **Umden, 75km:** Umden is north of Shillong in Ri-Bhoi district. A trip here includes witnessing and participating in the Eri silk production and weaving of traditional handlooms like ryndia and stoles (Traveller's Nest ☎9862630041).
- **Kongthong, 53km:** Wedged between the Sohra and Pynursla ridges, Kongthong's highlights are organic honey production and the Whistling village where locals do not call each by their names;

instead, each person is assigned an individual whistling tune called 'jingrwai lawbei' that sounds like a bird call (Traveller's Nest ☎9856060347).

- **Mawphanlur, 74km:** Located in the plateau of the West Khasi Hills, Mawphanlur promises great kayaking, trekking, camping, fishing and angling options. Close by is the Mawthadraishan peak with seven small lakes atop the rocky hills (Traveller's Nest ☎9615043847).
- **Mawlynggot, 43 km:** Located in the East Khasi Hills, the village is surrounded by idyllic vistas of tea gardens. Organic teas like black tea, green tea and white tea are produced under the brand name 'Urolong Tea'. An odd, blue worm migration during the monsoons can be seen here (☎8974009244 to book accommodation).

The Great Outdoors

Ditch your comfort zone and join the great outdoors in Meghalaya, with caving, river canyoning, scuba diving, zip lining, camping and trekking. Sign up for day-long or longer trips with outdoor outfits that know the region like the back of their hands.

KHASI & JAINTIA HILLS

- **Campfire Trails** From these experts in village tourism, you can expect comfortable, basic facilities and amenities and customised trips to suit your fitness level and adventure quotient. ☎9856001871; Contact Aaron and Zorba; www.campfiretrails.com; DD Laloo & Co, GS Road, Police Bazaar; trips starting from ₹3500 per head (excl transportation).

- **Pioneer Adventure Tours** This is Meghalaya's go-to adventure outfit for scuba diving, zip lining, river rafting, rappelling, canyoning, rock climbing, and a host of other adventure activities. Day trips, camping packages and individual activities can be booked. Mawkdok Dympep Valley before Cherrapunjee and Shnongpdeng, 90km from Shillong, are best for adventure activities. Zip lining (₹300–700/head) and scuba diving, upto 12 metres (₹2500/head) are popular. Locally prepared food is a bonus. ☎9049442647; Contact Jason; www.pioneeradventuretour.com; day trips/overnight trips ₹5500/7000 per head (incl all meals, transportation and activities except caving and mountaineering).

- **Meghalaya Adventure Tours** This caving and river canyoning outfit offers five signature trips. Caving demands fitness and learning the techniques too. Not more than 10 people go on one caving trip. Krem Mawluh, Krem Riblai (suitable for those who have done vertical caving previously), Krem Dam, Krem Mawpun and Krem Stu are caves where infrastructure has been set up. ☎364 2545621; Contact Gregory Diengoh.

- **Cafe Cherrapunjee** For a range of long and short treks and rural tourism, contact Alan West of Cafe Cherrapunjee. ☎8014859700; www.cafecherrapunjee.com; long treks starting from ₹3200 per person.

✓ Top Tip: Other travel outfits

For credible travel outfits that offer customised trips in the region, contact Northeast Adventure (☎7795071094); The India Trail (☎9774039490; www.theindiatrail.org); and Kipepeo (☎9930002412; www.kipepeo.in).



Tour groups arrange for scuba diving in the pristine river waters

GARO HILLS

- **Tura Adventure Club** Nokrek and Kemragre are villages off Tura, where the traveller can stay in traditional huts. An orientation to cuisine, local dance and music along with hikes and treks can be organised. Contact Rocky (☎9089184904) and Eric (☎98560 02020); www.facebook.com/Tura-Adventure-Club.

- **Daribok Rural Resort** (Daribokgre, near Nokrek National Park, East Garo Hills). Stay includes Nok Achik (traditional Garo house) and Nok Pante (bachelors' dorm), and three campsites (Nokma Bandasal Campsite, Simsang Niwat Campsite and Daribok Helipad Campsite). Recommended for naturalists and enthusiasts. Treks include Matcha Nokpante (5.5km), Abong Noga Apal (6km), Sakalgre (5km) and the site of a WWII plane crash, where the debris can still be found. The Nokrek region was the hot bed for Big Foot sightings in the 1990s. Campsites/Nok Achik/Nok Pante ₹100/1500/1000 per head; food extra; guides ₹500/day.

- **Rangira Rural Resort** (Kemragre, Babadam, West Garo Hills) Expect to see and stay in local homes, dormitories and witness jhum cultivation at close quarters. A trek to Rangira peak and cycling tours of the village can be organised. Campsites/Nok Achik/Nok Pante ₹100/1500/1000 per head; food extra; guides ₹500/day.



Meghalaya's Best Trips

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The Krang Suri Falls in the Jaintia Hills are a beautiful sight to behold



SHILLONG & AROUND

Why Go?

Shillong exudes a natural small-town feel with a new commercial exuberance. It's stubbornly old school and minus any malls. The town is dotted with centuries-old schools and colleges, gable-roofed homes and church spires, and football fans. Poker straight pine trees are juxtaposed against the deliberate march of urban development. The capital city is the perfect springboard to exploring Meghalaya.

i Quick Facts

GETTING THERE

Guwahati (114km) and Umroi (30km) are the nearest airports. Guwahati is the closest railhead. Shillong is also well-connected to Tripura, Mizoram and major tourist zones in Meghalaya by road.

Cabs to Shillong, including Uber cabs, are available from the airport and railway station. Local transportation in Shillong consists of buses and shared unmetered yellow and black taxis. The taxis are

far more convenient and economical (minimum ₹10), but be prepared to squeeze in with three others if you get a place in the back seat.

WHEN TO GO

All year round

GREAT FOR



Umiam Lake is a man-made reservoir

📍 Sights

Umiam Lake (Bara Pani)

The man-made reservoir, located 15km from the heart of the town, was built in the 1960s to store water for hydroelectric power generation, but has become a popular sightseeing spot. The roadside lookout point, offering a 180-degree view of the lake, is lined with a row of snack shanties. Drive down to the Water Sports Complex for boating and other sports. A boathouse, anchored to the Lumpondeng Island in this mammoth lake, can be rented for overnight stay.

📞364 2570258; Bara Pani; adult/camera ₹20/50; boating ₹400–1500 per boat/hr; 9am–5pm; Boathouse 📞9856528233; d ₹2500

Elephant Falls

The three-tiered Elephant Falls with its tree-scented woodlands are a sight to behold, especially in the monsoon. A well-marked stepped path takes you from tier 1 to 3 down a hill, along slabs of rocks with water flowing over them. It was the British who named the spot Elephant Falls after a rockscape on the left that resembled a pachyderm. Though the rock was destroyed in an earthquake in 1897, the name stuck.

Off Mawsynram–Shillong Rd; adult/child/parking/camera/video ₹20/5/20/20/100; 7am–6.30pm

The exhibits at Don Bosco Centre offer an insight into the Northeast



❤️ If You Like: Museums

Shillong has many special-interest museums. Here is a list:

Air Force Museum Here you will find India's aviation history (think Indo-China and Indo-Pak wars) and other war exhibits (📞9472500691; Shillong–Mawsynram Rd; entry free; 9am–5pm (Mon closed)).

Wankhar Entomology Museum An impressive one-room museum commemorates zoologist SK Sircar, who collected insects. His daughter, Werwina Wankhar runs it at her home now (📞364 2544473; near Christian Academy School, Riatsamthiah; Indian/foreigner ₹50/100, video ₹500; 11am–4pm (Sun closed); only 5 photographs allowed; ₹10 per shot).

Capt Williamson Sangma State Museum The state museum has a well-curated collection of life in Meghalaya and the Northeast (Secretariat Hills; adult/child/mobile camera/video ₹5/5/10/100; 10am–5pm).

Everliving Museum Everliving Museum displays a comprehensive personal collection (📞8730025149; www.northeasttourism.gov.in; Mawshbuit–Sweet Falls Rd; adult/child/camera ₹50/20/50; 10.30am–5.30pm).

Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures

The seven-storeyed museum is a well-managed and informative window to the Northeast with touch-screen information kiosks and audio-visual backed exhibits. Different galleries focus on the people, professions and history of the region.

📞364 2550260; www.dbcic.org; Mawlai; adult/camera/video ₹100/100/200; 9am–5.30pm

Golf Course

The staggering 18-hole Shillong Golf Course is the second oldest in the country and was once called 'Glen of the East.' Golf was introduced here by the British in 1898 but the

course was constructed in 1924 with a gorgeous clubhouse. It has one of the longest distances to a hole (594 yards) in the country. In the evenings, the golf course is taken over by kids playing football and walkers/joggers.

📞364 2501365; Shillong Golf Club; non-members upto ₹500, caddy ₹300 for all holes; 6am–sunset

Ward's Lake

Ward's Lake is a calming waterbody in the midst of a busy city. A white wooden bridge hangs over the sprawling central body of water, around which manicured gardens are dotted with walkers, joggers or courting couples. Lively flower beds provide a backdrop for selfies. Walk across the road to the Botanical



The All Saints' Cathedral retains its classical 19th century architectural style

Garden and India Orchidarium that houses rare orchids and plants.

Off Camel's Back Rd; adult/child & senior citizen/camera/video ₹10/5/20/200; Mar–Oct 8.30am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–7pm Sat–Sun and Nov–Feb 8.30am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–5pm Sat–Sun

Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians

The landmark grey church is the principal place of worship for over 300,000 Catholics of the region and is simply known as the Cathedral

Church. The former structure was built in 1913 by German missionaries, and called the Church of the Divine Saviour, but burnt down on Good Friday in 1936.

☎9613786126; Lachumiere; 9am–5pm Sun only

All Saints' Cathedral

The timber structure of the All Saints' Cathedral still has remnants of the classic architecture of the 19th century. A massive earthquake in 1897 left it in shambles, but it was rebuilt and opened in 1902 with all its pristine charm intact.

Secretariat Hills; 7.30am–4.30pm Sun only

✓ Top Tip: Shillong Chamber Choir

Started in 2001 by Neil Nongkynrih, this choral group has performed all over the world and shared the stage with the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, the Fitz William Quartet, Usha Uthup and Ustad Zakir Hussain among others. Drawing inspiration from Khasi folk tunes, Bollywood and western classical music, the multi-genre choir has crooned for the Obamas at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and for the 2017 opening of the Indian Premier League, India's major cricketing event.

Songs from their 2013 album 'Christmas Everyday' are a favourite choice during the weeks leading up to Christmas. Do try and catch an Xmas performance (www.shillongchamberchoir.com).

Sweet Falls

One of the most underrated spots in Shillong lies 5km from Happy Valley. Fresh air and paved steps to the viewing pavilion are the main highlights of the falls.

Adult/child/parking ₹20/10/5; sunrise–sunset

Shillong Peak (Laitkor Peak)

Shillong Peak (1950m), the city's highest point is a 10km drive away. Climb the concrete machan to get sweeping views of the Shillong Valley. The place has a package

The multi-genre Shillong Chamber Choir is world famous



♥ If You Like: Tagore's Art Gallery

Slide off the main tourist trail to visit the Rabindranath Tagore Art Gallery. In the early 1900s, Tagore spent significant time in Shillong and penned *Shesher Kobita* and *Raktakarabi*. His desk, bed and memorabilia are on display for visitors.

Brookside, Riblong; 10am–5pm Mon–Fri

tourism vibe with photo stalls, souvenir shops and snack kiosks. A valid identity card has to be deposited at the gate to visit the Air Force Museum.

Adult/child/camera/video/car
₹20/10/20/100/20; 9am–4pm

Khasi girls in their ceremonial attire



Laitlum Canyon

Leave early to drive almost 23km south of Shillong to Laitlum, which means 'end of hills'. This stunning canyon offers panoramic views. Made famous by the Bollywood movie, *Rock On 2*, Laitlum offers a trek on a paved path leading from the vast rocky escarpment to Rasong Village (2–3hrs). The lip of



Panoramic vista of Meghalaya

the canyon is great for photography, and you would miss a heartbeat as you look down at the plunging valley below. En route to Laitlum, one can stop at Smit Village to see the Ing Sad – a housing structure made of stone, wood, bamboo and thatch. This is the traditional seat of power of the Hima Khyriem, a sub-tribe of the Khasis. The annual Nongkrem dance is held here in November. Video/camera ₹50/30

U Lum Sohpetbneng

The village, sought by hiking enthusiasts, lies 20km from Shillong and is marked by a large wooden gate with a rooster on top. Known as the 'navel of heaven' it is believed to be the sacred spot that once connected heaven and earth by a

golden bridge. February is reserved for special rituals and pilgrimages by the Khasis.

Sunrise–sunset

Snapshot: Teer

Seeing people glued to the phone around 3.30–4.30pm is not an uncommon sight in Shillong. Intensive betting on Teer (rongbiria/archery) takes place across the state and hooks everyone on for an hour in the afternoon. Earlier in the day, authorised counters sell lottery tickets across the city. Many people even rely on dreams for guessing the winning numbers. The betting system was legalised in 1982.

◀ Detour: Short trips from Shillong

SOHLIYA VILLAGE

Located 35km from Shillong, Sohliya is popular for horticulture and Meghalaya's strawberries. Stay at The Sanctuary Song (☎9436104844) – a property surrounded by dense forest canopies that are home to nearly 100 endemic birds. Birding, hiking, and angling are possibilities.

MAWPHLANG SACRED FOREST

Drive out 25km from Shillong to the famous sacred forest of Mawphlang, to walk through a thick canopy of trees. Locals believe that the 78 hectares of land are protected by the local deity, Labasa, so not even

Locals believe that a wood spirit protects the sacred forest at Mawphlang

a single twig can be taken out from here. The forest entrance is marked by tall stone monoliths. Hire a guide from the lone teashop at the entrance, who will regale you with ancient tales of sacrifice and rituals and share information on local flora. Guides John: ☎9856455948; Nangtei: ☎9856586670; McDuff: ☎8258809973; ₹1200 per group/₹200 per person; sunrise–sunset

DAVID SCOTT TRAIL

Mawphlang is the starting point of a 16km hiking trail made popular by British officer, David Scott in the 1800s. The 16km is just a short patch of the original 209km chalked out between Assam and Bangladesh. The trail ends at Lad Mawphlang, near Cherrapunjee. Start early to enjoy the 4-hour hike.

MAWSYNRAM

The rain washed Mawsynram gained a spot on the tourist map ever since it was declared the wettest place on earth. With an average annual rainfall of 11,872 mm, it stormed past Cherrapunjee that now records 100mm less rain than Mawsynram.

MAWJYMBUIN CAVE

Mawsynram is famous for a fascinating canopy of rocks that shades a Shivalinga-like black stone, on which water drips constantly from above. Adult/child/parking ₹10/10/10; sunrise–sunset

JAKREM

Jakrem, 64km from Shillong, lures picnickers to bathe in the sulphur-filled curative waters of the hot springs. The laidback riverside spot is popular with schools, so expect to see a bevy of kids. Adult/parking ₹20/10; 5am–8pm. Check out other short trips (p21),

🏠 Accommodation &

🍴 Eating

MAWPHLANG

MaplePine Farm B&B

☎9856041205; www.culturalpursuits.com; Lyngkein, Hima Mawphlang, Mawmysrang; d ₹1000–1600 (minimum

B&B ₹



The Mawjymbuin Cave draws tourists and pilgrims alike

2-night stay) Base yourself at this B&B, run by James and his wife, Valariena, to unplug from the regular travel plans. This family-run farm stay has four wooden insulated cottages with attached toilets and camping facilities (a common shower with a solar water heater). The farm is a 'no-plastic' zone.

Susie's Restaurant

GERMAN ₹


☎8575536592; Mawkriah Village; mains ₹250–500 Located in Mawkriah village on the way to Mawphlang, the restaurant offers German cuisine. The Sunday German buffet is extremely popular. The restaurant was temporarily closed in March 2017. Check before visiting.



Accommodation

A range of staying options is available and Shillong is big on Bed & Breakfasts.

Ri Kynjai HOTEL ₹₹₹

 9862420300; www.rikynjai.com; Umiam Lake, UCC Rd; d from ₹8000


A go-to for luxury, Ri Kynjai lies 22km off the city centre, facing the still waters and forests around Bara Pani. The architecture is a hybrid of modern and Khasi vernacular styles. All the rooms and the restaurant overlook the lake or the forest. Choose the upper floor rooms for better views. At the spa, pick the classic Khasi massage, Khem Tynrai.

Hotel Centre Point HOTEL ₹₹₹

 364 2220480; www.shillongcentrepoint.com; Khyndailad, Police Bazaar; d ₹5700–10,000


Centre Point has 31 rooms that are lavishly spacious and overlook the busy streets below. There are ample in-house dining and clubbing options.

Hotel Polo Towers HOTEL ₹₹₹

 364 2222341; www.hotelpolotowers.com; Polo Grounds; d ₹6950–11,950

Polo Towers has several selling points – a central location, longstanding credibility and comfortable rooms. It is one of Shillong's iconic buildings on Oakland Road.

Pinewood Hotel HOTEL ₹₹₹

 364 2223116; www.megtourism.gov.in; European Ward, Rita Rd; d ₹3100–10,000 (incl breakfast) Overlooking 8 acres of lawns, Pinewood's draw lies in its old world charm. It's ideal for travellers who like to stay a little away from the clutter of the town.

Royal Heritage-Tripura Castle HOTEL ₹₹₹

 364 2501111; Tripura Castle Rd, Cleve Colony; d ₹4000–9000 Once the Summer Palace of the royal family of the Manikya Dynasty of Tripura, the hotel is divided into two parts – the original building and the annexe. Vintage decor coupled with modern facilities and amenities make it an inviting place to stay. The annexe building is a short golf cart ride away. Its hilltop location ensures that you're tucked away from the city din – no wonder this is the first choice of many Bollywood A-listers.


Hotel The Heritage Club HOTEL ₹₹₹

 364 2505516; Cleve Colony; d ₹8000–12,500; cafe 1–10pm The 11 rooms (main building and a swankier new annexe) are furnished with vintage beds, study tables and hat racks. The wooden floor adds a dash of 'hill station' charm as it creaks when you walk. The in-house restaurant overlooks a garden, with a pool table, shed and a small pond. Try the signature Lone Rider (Kahlua and Jim Beam) cocktail and Bastenga.




Khasi and modern elements blend as Ri Kynjai rolls out luxurious comforts


Orchid Lake Resort RESORT ₹₹₹

 364 2570258; Umiam Lake, Ri Bhoi; d ₹2250–7000 Orchid Lake Resort's vantage location blends the wild forest surrounds of Umiam Lake with its neat landscaped gardens.

Hotel Poin Suk HOTEL ₹₹₹

 364 7100030; Laitumkhrach Point, Upland Rd, New Colony, Laitumkhrach; d ₹4200–6600 Centrally located and posh, Hotel Poin Suk is a mere saunter from the chic cafes of Laitumkhrach market. The 30 rooms are impeccably styled.

Saw Aiom B&B ₹₹₹

 8794707022; Golf Links, Pynthorukhrach; d ₹3000–5000 (incl

breakfast) Saw Aiom supersedes the usual B&B standards in Shillong in terms of decor, space and pricing. The end-of-the-road address edits out all the noise of the main street. A cosy common dining area, and the all-white soothing vibe are other highlights.

Cafe Shillong B&B B&B ₹₹₹

 8974066089; www.cafeshillongbnb.com; 31, Lower Lachumiere; d ₹3700–5200 The neat rows of potted plants on the verandah of a vintage Shillong house facing a green patch with chairs under a sun umbrella, reflect the cheer one can expect inside. Thoughtfully decorated and reasonably priced, Cafe Shillong B&B may be on top of the list for many travellers, so it's best to book ahead.

♥ If You Like: Khasi massage

Local masseurs can be called over at B&Bs for a soothing Khem Tynrai acupressure-like treatment with oil tapped from pine trees (₹500–1000).

The Pear Tree

B&B ₹

☎9862181977; Lower Lachumiere, near Village Khadi Board Office; d ₹5000 No points for guessing why this B&B is named 'The Pear Tree' – you would have to cross under its canopy to enter the reception desk. The charming white walls of the heated rooms and elegant decor help you slip into comfort immediately.

Fresh fruits on sticks are a healthy snack while on the go

Aerodene Cottage

B&B ₹

☎9774065366; www.aerodene.in; Lower Cleve Colony, Stonylands; d from ₹2800 (incl breakfast) This appealing garden-fronted Assam-style bungalow converted into a guesthouse features atmospheric rooms with soft beds, wooden floors, period decor and lots of fresh air. The newer annexe to the right has rooms that are less charming but equally comfortable. A vintage 1946 Jaguar in the garage transports one to old-world Shillong.

The Habitat

B&B ₹

☎364 222892; www.thehabitatshillong.com; Lady Veronica Lane, Laitumkhrach; d from ₹4073–4876 (incl breakfast)

If you're not looking to burn a hole in the pocket for a fabulous stay, walk right into The Habitat (aka Asian Confluence). The B&B is tucked

away from the chaos yet central enough to walk to the cafes. It has 11 elegantly styled rooms over two floors with a lounging area on the landing of the first floor.

Kaizun

B&B ₹

☎8794664730; www.kaizun.co; Lower Lachumiere; d 2640–3840 (incl breakfast) Kaizun or 'Little Inn' is a seven-room B&B with an in-house dining option in the heart of the city. The contemporary rooms are on the first floor and above, so may not be suitable for elders.

ZV The Homestead

B&B ₹

☎9612904717; House no 38, opp St. Anthony's College; s/d ₹2000/2800 (incl breakfast) Though one of the newer B&Bs, it offers the charm of old world hospitality. The owner and staff are generous with travel tips. There are three clean rooms fitted with a cupboard, TV, and kettle for tea or coffee. A wholesome breakfast is served out in the sunny balcony.

Pine Air

B&B ₹

☎9436924248; VIP Rd, Kyntonlieh, Mawroh; s/d ₹550–2250 (incl breakfast) Backpacker-focused Pine Air is a playground for learning and cultural immersion for travellers. Look out for events around photography, walks and nature preservation hosted by the B&B.

Sha Ri Loum

B&B ₹

☎9051415666; Mawroh–Mawtawar Rd, Umshing Mawkyroh; d ₹2500–3000

(incl breakfast) The four-room cottage has a front row view of a pine forest and is delightfully away from the city. Beautiful windows grace the stylish and spacious bedrooms – two on each floor, with or without TV.

🍴 Eating

Ri Kynjai

MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹₹

☎986220300; www.rikynjai.com; Umiam Lake, UCC Rd; mains more than ₹750, buffet adult/child ₹1200/700; 1–4pm

The Sao Aiom restaurant of Ri Kynjai offers a fine dining experience with multi-cuisine options in Indian, Chinese and continental fare. However, it is the Sunday buffet that is a popular choice for guests. Highlights include the smoked pork with bamboo and the famous Cherrapunjee chicken.

Dopwai

MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹₹

☎364 7100030; Laitumkhrach Point, Upland Rd, New Colony, Laitumkhrach; mains ₹750 onwards; 1–11pm

The rooftop restaurant of Hotel Poin Suk is another excellent pick from the flourishing food scene of Shillong. Here, the view and

♥ If You Like: Fruit-on-stick

Berries, cubed pineapple, strawberries and other fruits on a stick are on offer on pavements. For a mere ₹20, you can get a hefty clutch of them.



♥ If You Like: Jadoh stalls

- **Bara Bazaar** Deep in the bazaar, many nameless stalls serve Jadoh and are much more economical than the restaurants at Police Bazaar and GS Rd, but hygiene standards are questionable.
- **Trattoria** 📞7085921073 (Contact Kyrmeh); Police Bazaar; mains less than ₹250; 11am–8pm
- **Red Rice Restaurant** 📞364 2505556; GS Rd; mains less than ₹250; 10.30am–9pm

the outdoor setting do try and overshadow the cuisine.

City Hut

Family Dhaba NORTH INDIAN ₹₹

📞364 2220386; www.cityhutdhaba.com; Earle Holiday Home, Oakland Rd, Police Bazaar, mains ₹500–750; 11am–9.30pm Put your north Indian food cravings to rest at the city's top dhaba where barbeque, ice-cream, Indian and Chinese are available. Don't let the giddy decor of gnomes, curios, brightly coloured art and plants overshadow the taste – the food is actually good.

Cafe Shillong

Heritage CONTINENTAL ₹₹

📞364 2501149; Cleve Colony, Banasree; mains ₹250–500; noon–9.30pm At the base of the Royal Heritage-Tripura Castle annexe is Cafe

Shillong, with large glass windows and both indoor and outdoor seating. Grab an outside spot at dusk to see the lights come on in Shillong. Other hooks are live music on weekends and a fireplace to keep the temperature toasty.

Cafe Shillong PAN ASIAN ₹₹

📞364 2505759; LP Building, Laitumkhrach Main Rd, Nongkynrih, Laitumkhrach; mains ₹250–500; noon–9.30pm The inevitably packed Cafe Shillong is evergreen with its wooden floors, signed football jerseys from local stars, a Les Paul guitar and graffiti by patrons on two large boards. The live rock and jazz gigs and a vantage first floor location over the Laitumkhrach market are major attractions.

Cafe Dylan CAFE ₹₹

📞7085056522; Tripura Castle Rd, Dhankheti, Malki; mains ₹250–500; 11.30am–10pm This cafe in Shillong pays tribute to Bob Dylan and welcomes you with a menu that dedicates its first page to the 'Tambourine Man'. Dylan-themed memorabilia are present everywhere – mugs, signages and a wall with his framed pictures. The wooden panels on the walls have been up-cycled from the first ballroom in Shillong.

La Gallerie CHINESE ₹₹

📞364 2220480; www.shillongcentrepoin.com; Khyndailad, Police Bazaar; mains ₹500–750; 11.30am–10pm A veritable oasis in the middle of the chaotic Police Bazaar area, Centre Point's La Gallerie

serves largely Chinese cuisine, with a smattering of north Indian options as well. Wednesday nights (8pm onwards) are reserved for local rock legend, Lou Majaw to croon Dylan songs and more.

ML05 CAFE ₹₹

📞9612476202; AH 1, near Eastern Air Command; mains ₹250–500; 10.30am–7.30pm A highway cafe themed on vehicles is sure to give bike, cycle and car lovers the fuel that they need. ML05 is named after the vehicle number plates of Shillong. An Enfield bike hanging from the ceiling, lighting fashioned from car head lamps and a steering wheel on the main door bring the design inspiration home.

Little Chef Cafe CAFE ₹₹

📞9089083692; Laitumkhrach Main Rd, Nongkynrih, Laitumkhrach; mains ₹250–500; 12.30–8.30pm Settle in at the airy Little Chef to dig your fangs

into the roast pork burger. This alone will make a trip worthwhile.

Delhi **Misthan Bhandar** NORTH INDIAN ₹₹

📞9436103136; Police Bazaar, mains ₹250–500; 7.30am–9.30pm The world's biggest jalebi was once made in Shillong and also made it to the *Limca Book of Records*. Delhi Misthan Bhandar is known for this and its daily feats of bringing the best of north Indian sweets and essentials like chhola bhatura to regular patrons.

Phunga MANIPURI ₹₹

Laitumkhrach Market; mains ₹250–500; 10.30am–11pm Authentic Manipuri cuisine and the vibe of a Manipuri kitchen are wonderfully packaged together. Phunga means 'fireplace' in the local language. The veg or non-

Steamed momos at the hot wheels themed ML05 cafe





Cafe Dylan offers memorabilia and a hefty menu of meals and snacks

veg thalis are recommended for a wholesome taste of a Manipuri meal.

Munchies CAFE ₹

☎8974087724; Rani Villa, near Don Bosco Square, Laitumkhrach Main Rd; mains less than ₹250; 10am–9.30pm Mon–Sat, 3–9.30pm Sun Munchies has bar stools and scattered seating with a thatched top. It's the chosen hang-out for price conscious students. The juicy beef burgers fly out the fastest and cost only ₹80.

Nightlife

Cloud 9

☎364 2220480; www.shillongcentrepoint.com; Khyndailad,

Police Bazaar; mains ₹500–750; 1–11pm A 9th floor sanctuary from the bustle of the market below, the bar is a perfect place to unwind at the end of the day. They have regular live gigs and an in-house DJ on Saturday nights.

Polo Irish Bar

☎364 2222341; www.hotelpolotowers.com; Polo Grounds; mains ₹500–750; 1–11pm Hotel Polo Tower's in-house bar and lounge has a mid-century feel to it that vanishes promptly on Saturday nights when electronic music holds sway.

Shopping

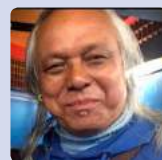
The main shopping centres of Shillong lie on the Laitumkhrach Street, Police Bazaar (Khyndailad) and Bara Bazaar (Lewduh).

Khasi Emporium CLOTHING, SOUVENIRS

☎9612609891; Police Bazaar; 10am–8pm A jumble of local shawls, bamboo baskets, key rings and necklaces make for a decent stop to pick up souvenirs from Shillong.

Megha Emporium CLOTHING, SOUVENIRS

☎9863089086; Police Bazaar; 10.30am–9pm Handloom, pure honey, silk and cane products representing the entire Northeast shrink your shopping time to just one stop.



EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

Shillong's top gigs

Shillong's musical legend, Lou Majaw, a Bob Dylan bhakt has galvanised the rock scene for 50 years. Here are his favourite music joints in the city.

CAFE SHILLONG

Most of Shillong's musical wealth can be attributed to the friendly ambience of Cafe Shillong. Drop in at the weekends where evenings here erupt with impromptu gigs, including nervous first timers.

CLOUD 9

Cloud 9 is a favourite venue that carries the energy of rock music to the new (and old) generation of club-goers. Countless musical legends grace its stage.

LA GALLERIE

This intimate venue sports a more

classic look. Despite the closures that have plagued the more recent clubs and restaurants in town, this one keeps its old world character alive even now.

LOU MAJAW'S OWN HOME

Lou Majaw's own home is a place that is hard to miss. He often hosts an intimate group to jam with and be part of the, unarguably, best music scene in town. Message him to check if you can join in (☎9436119395).

Soulmate is one of Shillong's best known blues band





CHERRAPUNJEE & AROUND (KHASHI HILLS)

Why Go?

Cherrapunjee is an evocative place. Locally known as Sohra, it has a perpetual cover of cottony clouds when you look up and emerald green hills when you look around. Cosy low-roof homes in sparsely populated hamlets sprinkle a dash of colour to the otherwise green canvas. The town and surrounding places embody nature's best in a million large and small waterfalls, tropical trees loaded with fruits and acres full of spices.

i Quick Facts

GETTING THERE

It's best to reach Cherrapunjee via Shillong and drive 54km here by bus and taxi. Cabs are available from the airport and railway station right up to Cherrapunjee (non AC/ AC ₹3000/₹4000 approx). From Guwahati by road, hit the NH40 and then SH5 to Cherrapunjee.

For local transportation it's best to hire a cab right from Shillong and book it for an entire sightseeing loop. Public transport to various

sightseeing spots is erratic and difficult to plan a day with.

WHEN TO GO

All year round

GREAT FOR



Root bridges are a unique phenomenon that bring nature and man together

Sights

Nohkalikai Waterfall

Travel on a clear day to the largest plunge waterfall in India (340 metres), as grey clouds often fill the valley, making it invisible from many viewing points. A massive white curtain of water swirls into a blue pool below. Stalls selling curios, spices and two restaurants are located near the parking lot. From here, a lesser-known walking trail leads to the head of the waterfall (accessible only when the falls are dry). It's recommended to go with a local guide for ₹600. The falls are named after the legend of Likai who threw herself into the falls upon the gruesome murder of her infant by her jealous husband.

Adult/child/camera/phone
camera/tablet/video/parking
₹10/5/20/20/20/50/20; sunrise–sunset

Mawkdok Dympep Valley

Mawkdok has all the trappings of package tourism – Maggi stalls, lookout points, and a highly popular zip lining activity by Pioneer Adventure Tours (p22).

📞9049442647; Contact Jason; www.pioneeradventuretour.com; book ahead small line (1089 ft)/big line (2500 ft) ₹300/700; 9am–4pm (weather dependent)

Wah Kabah

The first waterfall on entering Sohra is the Wah Kabah. Instead of stopping at its head (near the road) drive about 500 metres ahead for a better view of the U-shaped escarpment and the falls.

Sunrise–sunset

Clouds and foaming falls meet at the Seven Sisters Waterfalls



Detour: Thangkharang Park

Almost 8km from Sohra, the 5.5-hectare park is maintained by the Forest Department and features gardens, a greenhouse with rare endemic plants, fishponds, swings and views of the Kynrem waterfall. This is the erstwhile stopover for traders who travelled to the mainland from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

Sohra–Shella Rd; adult/child/camera/parking ₹10/5/20/20; Apr–Sep 7am–3pm and Oct–Mar 7am–4pm (Wed closed)

Ram Krishna Mission Museum

The Ram Krishna Mission museum stands beside a temple and school. The museum showcases exhibits from the tribes of the Northeast. PO Cherra Bazaar; entry free; 8.30am–4.30pm

Arwah-Lumshynna Tourist Hub

Enter the Arwah-Lumshynna gate and walk for 150 metres to a paved trail to the caves, rife with stalagmites and stalactites, and vistas of green valleys with rivers snaking past. The complex also has a basic restaurant, The Cliff Wok. Pdeng Shnong, Sohra; adult/child/torch/camera/smart phone/parking ₹20/10/20/50/20/20; 8am–5pm

Dainthelen Waterfall

The waterfall stutters over a hunk of black stony bed, corroded with the flow over years. The sheer height and sound of the water falling is awe-inspiring.

Parking ₹20; sunrise–sunset

Nohngithiang Waterfalls

Seven waterfalls leap off a large U-shaped escarpment, giving them the name **Seven Sisters Waterfalls**. One can spend hours, watching the clouds drift in and out of the valley and the silver falls.

Parking ₹20; sunrise–sunset

Mawsmai Cave

This long and complex network of limestone caves has only a section of 150 metres open for travellers, featuring a paved path. The stalagmites and stalactites are a handiwork of nature and well worth the trot, 6km from town.

Adult/child/camera ₹10/5/50; 9.30am–5.30pm

Kynrem Waterfall

Almost 20km from the Bangladesh border, Kynrem looks like a white sheet hung from a jagged rockscap. Off the road, a viewing pavilion offers a sight of the plunging waterfall.

Sohra–Shella Rd



The rock-mound Khoh Ramhah turns emerald green after the rains

Motop (Khoh Ramhah)

This imposing single rock-mound looks like a cross between a large Shivalinga and a hill, and is best seen from a viewing point close to its top. During the monsoons, it is a breathtaking sight to see the water flow through two other rocks that lie

close by. You can combine this with Kynrem Falls.

Sohra–Shella Rd; parking ₹10; sunrise–sunset

Five Bridges & a Waterfall

The starting point of the popular Double Decker Bridge hike is Tyrna village. Some 2500 tiny paved steps descend at least 2000 ft into the valley, rich in oranges, guavas, areca,

✓ Top Tip: Living root bridges

Walking on the living root bridges of Meghalaya is like entering a fantasy forest world. The Khasi tribes braid the roots of large fig rubber trees, allowing them to grow to the length of bridges. The process can take over 40 years. While over 50 such bridges are present in the valleys of Cherrapunjee, the most famous hiking loop is off the Laitkynsew village (14km).

The entry tariff is applicable for all bridges. Only the Double Decker Root Bridge, Mawsaw Bridge and Rainbow Falls are clubbed under one entry fee.

• **Guides:** Batskhem (Bat): ☎9856892992; Ebinesan: ☎9402501738; Wosley Majaw: ☎9485005692; Evnis: ☎9615968903.

• **Stay at Nongriat:** Two basic guesthouses are available: Serene Guesthouse (☎9436739655; ₹300–500 per person), and Nongriat Guesthouse (☎8575787340; ₹200 per person).

bay leaf and woodland treasures. At the base is the Long Root Bridge. The **Double Decker Bridge** is just off the Nongriat village – a popular spot for hikers and backpackers to spend the night. The bridge hangs over a natural pool of water, formed by the River Umsiang. On the same route, one can also visit the Mawsaw Bridge further ahead.

A 3km hike from the Double Decker Bridge takes you to the **Rainbow Waterfall** – where a perpetual rainbow forms thanks to the constant mist and bright sunlight. Keep ample time to walk back to Tyrna. You can also add another 2.5 hours to reach Nohkalikai from Rainbow, but this is recommended only for experts. On this route, you also encounter sacred groves and at least three rickety wire suspension bridges. It's best to take guides to

help identify plants, to manoeuvre through the tough parts, and for encouragement while crossing the suspension bridges.

Adult/child/camera ₹10/5/20; sunrise–sunset; keep change handy;

Water and snacks available at entry points; Tyrna–Double Decker Bridge (3km)–Rainbow Falls(3km); keep at least 8 hours in hand; avoid Sundays as guides are busy

Nongwar Village

Drive just 3km from Laitkynsew, to see village life at close quarters and a viewpoint called Mawrong. Many people go here before the Tyrna hike for a short warm-up and a view of the forested valley leading to the Double Decker Bridge. You can also spot Mawsynram village right across the hills from here.

♥ If You Like: Sohra's colonial remnants

- **Nongsawlia Presbyterian Church** The Welsh missionaries first stepped into the Khasi Hills in the 1840s. The Presbyterian Church built in 1846 under the supervision of Rev. Thomas Jones, is the first in Meghalaya. Nearby are the tombs of Welsh missionaries and an Anglican Cemetery.
- **British Cemetery** Located in Dongskul, the British cemetery is locally known as jingtepphareng. Here, 18 British officers who died between 1830–1866 lie buried.
- **David Scott Memorial** An obelisk marks the memorial of David Scott (p34), the officer who chalked out a trail from Assam to Bangladesh.

Umnoi

A new living root bridge is being constructed in Siej village, 2km off Laitknysew. It may take another 30 years to complete and it is fascinating to see the villagers at work – tugging, shaping and directing roots to weave them together to make a hardy bridge.

Adult/student/camera ₹20/10/10;
sunrise–sunset

Mawlynnong & Around

The sobriquet of the 'Cleanest Village of India' has boosted tourism to this faraway village. Rainwater harvesting, a good drainage system, bathrooms in all homes, no plastic and a garbage disposal system are now a way of life for the locals here. Mawlynnong is a day trip from both Shillong (78km) and Sohra (81km). Kutmadan Resort has mountain views and cosy comforts

Head to the village square, stop for a meal, walk around and leave by the end of the day. Contact guide Rishan ☎8014078396, if you're looking to stay in a local homestay and go on hikes or go exploring root bridges. Vehicle ₹50

Riwai Living Root Bridge

En route to Mawlynnong from Cherrapunjee, a small village called Riwai offers a 500-metre walk to a living root bridge over a stream. The path is much easier than the one from Tynra and can be managed by elders too.

₹10; sunrise–sunset



Accommodation

Polo Orchid Resort RESORT ₹₹₹

☎9856000222; Nohsngithiang Falls; d ₹6449–14,999 (incl breakfast) The resort is right in front of the Seven



Cafe Cherrapunjee was a former dak bungalow

Sisters Waterfalls at the edge of a valley. On offer are exclusive rooms, log cabins with private plunge pools, all overlooking a magnificent bed of clouds. Raincafe, the in-house restaurant, doubles up as a viewing deck. Down a drink at The Irish Pub.

Kutmadan Resort RESORT ₹₹₹

☎8014859700; MDR 27, Behind NIT Campus; d ₹2850–4050 (incl breakfast)

Stretch out on the comfy chairs of your personal sit-out and concentrate on a sprawling fortress of mountains. The views at night are special when the lights twinkle across the border. With no phone signal or internet, it is the ideal pad to unwind and take in Sohra's weather. A common dining hall and bonfire are add-ons.

Sa-I-Mika Resort RESORT ₹₹

☎9863020718; www.saimikapark.com; Sohra; d ₹2000–4300 (incl breakfast)

Sa-I-Mika is TV-less and homey. Rooms with hardwood floors, fireplaces, stone walls, a traditional Khasi house and a luxury tent are on offer. The common dining area with a fireplace is perfect to catch up on a book or meet other guests. There is a sprawl of swings and a playground for kids.

Cafe Cherrapunjee HOTEL ₹₹

☎8014859700; www.cafecherrapunjee.com; Shillong–Sohra Rd; d cottages/tents ₹4045/2842 This 125-year-old 'Dak Bungalow' with stone walls lies before the main tourist belt near Mawkdok. The Cherrapunjee Tourist Office (10am–4pm) is in the same complex as is a namesake



restaurant that is open to drive-in guests as well.

Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort

RESORT ₹

📞9436311148; 8794803833; www.cherrapunjee.com; Laitkynsew; d ₹3700/3940/4425 (incl breakfast)

Dennis P Rayen and his wife run the place without TV or wi-fi – urging one to really connect with nature. Dennis still oversees breakfast and hospitality in the main building and is always ready for a chat. The resort is an ideal base camp for the Double Decker Bridge trek.

Cordial Lodge

HOTEL ₹

📞9856338245; Mawsmal; d from ₹2800–4000; restaurant 10am–7pm

Do ask for a spacious room and good view, while booking. The in-house multi-cuisine restaurant is a big plus since the lodge is not within walking distance from the main town for meals.

La Kupar Inn is a cosy guesthouse



7 Sisters Falls View Inn

HOTEL ₹

📞9862542945; Nohngithiang; d from ₹2000–5000; restaurant 7am–9pm

Located right opposite the namesake waterfalls, this inn offers clean rooms and optimum pricing. Sixteen rooms and a cottage are packed to the rafters during season and weekends. Book well ahead of your trip.

Me-Me-Ai Resort

B&B ₹

📞8794053902; Kutmadan Village;

s/d ₹3000/4000 This no-frills self-proclaimed 'resort' has four simple rooms, over two floors.

The upper floor rooms do promise stunning views of the valley and the Bangladesh plains.

Nalgre Restaurant & Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE ₹

📞7578044872; Cherrapunjee Main Rd; d ₹2000–2500 Nalgre promises a comfortable and economical stay

with room service, a clean loo, some psychedelic art on the walls and even a TV.

La Kupar Inn

GUESTHOUSE ₹

📞9615093898; lakuparinn.com;

Sohra–Shella Rd, Lower Cherrapunjee, Saitsohpen; d ₹2500 (incl breakfast)

The low-key guesthouse meets comfy boutique hotel vibe is doubled with a large glass walled cafe (7.30am–9pm) and working wi-fi. They offer five rooms, spread over two floors. Choose the upper one for better natural light.

Sohra Plaza

B&B ₹

📞9774970825; Junction to Dainthlen Falls; d from ₹1850–2100 Spacious and cheerful rooms with great views and clean loos make Sohra Plaza an economical homestay. It is located away from the main bazaar area, so it makes sense to have a vehicle with you.

Mawsmal

HOMESTAY

📞9612007851; Mawsmal Rd; d ₹1500–2000 (with TV) The homestay is at the head of the road that leads to Mawsmal caves. It's a no-frills pad, ideal for budget travellers. Choose from three spacious rooms, one with a TV in it.

Streamside

GUESTHOUSE

📞8575255560; Mawlynngong; d ₹2500, 3000 (with TV) A stream runs by this six-room guesthouse – a highly recommended option for families and large groups who don't want to stay in the homestays of the village (2 mins drive).

Areca

COTTAGES

📞8014859700; Mawlynngong Village; d ₹3500 Here are two well-furnished cottages with wooden floors, kettles, an attic and clean loos. The lookouts have first-row seats to a large areca plantation.



Eating

Orange Roots

VEGETARIAN ₹

📞8257060234; Mot Karahi; mains ₹250–500; 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Sat,

9.30am–6.30pm Sun The first gastro stop on the way to Sohra has a menu packed with north and south Indian dishes. Enter the brightly lit hall with glass windows to seat yourself and dig in.

7 Sisters Falls View Inn

Restaurant

MULTI-CUISINE ₹

📞9862542945; Nohngithiang; mains ₹250–500; 7am–9pm Take in views of the cloudy delights of the Seven Sisters Waterfalls and enjoy easy-on-the-tummy combos of chicken, dal and rice.

Harari

Restaurant

MULTI-CUISINE ₹

Opp petrol pump; mains ₹250–500; 8.30am–8.30pm Located in the heart of town, this restaurant features reasonably palatable mixed fare.

Bansiewdor Dhaba & Rikhasi Dhaba

MULTI-CUISINE ₹

Nohkalikai; mains less than ₹250; 7am–6.30pm Located in the parking lot of the Nohkalikai falls, the dhabas offer a predictable fare of momos, vegetarian food (paneer and dal) and rice-curry combos.

Nalgre

Restaurant

MULTI-CUISINE ₹

📞7578044872; Cherrapunjee Main Rd; mains less than ₹250, 11am–6pm

The unpretentious restaurant trumps the competition with its winning egg thali (₹150) and sweet milky tea. It also serves easy fare



Meghalaya has many under-17 football clubs for young talent

like rice combos with fish, vegetable curry and chicken.

Hala-i-trep

CAFE ₹

Mawlynnong; mains less than ₹250;
6.30am–8.30pm Simple combinations

of rice, dal, fish and eggs and local food cater swiftly to busloads of tourists.

Laikyrri

CAFE ₹

Mawlynnong; mains less than ₹250;
7am–10pm Chicken and fish fly out fast from Laikyrri's kitchen.



If You Like: Football

Football is Meghalaya's favourite sport. It's not uncommon to find young boys dribbling the ball across little hamlets on the mountains. The number of clubs, teams, minor and major across Shillong and elsewhere in the state offer testimony as to its popularity. The Shillong Lajong FC is a club that was formed to bring regional pride and sports together as Lajong means 'our own' in Khasi. The Lajong regularly uses the 30,000 capacity Nehru Football Stadium in Shillong for its matches. Teams across the state include Nongkrem, Royal Wahingdoh, Meghalaya Police, Langsning and more.



EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

A Meghalayan platter

Mumbai-based **Gitika Saikia** is a Northeast food curator of menus. She organises pop ups. Check out Gitika's PakGhor for her signature food.

Meghalaya's cuisine has three distinctive regional specialties – Garo, Khasi and Jaintia. Rice dishes are popular and the cooking medium is mustard oil with black and white sesame seeds often used as a garnish or ground to a paste.

RICE DISHES

Jadoh is a popular Khasi one-pot meal where long-grain and coloured hill rice is cooked in pork blood, intestines and broth with a paste of black sesame. **Putharo** is a steamed rice pancake with coconut often spotted on breakfast menus. **Pukhlein** is a jingbam or snack of powdered rice and local jaggery fried in lard or any white oil. **Ja snam** is a flavourful concoction of brown rice and chicken blood often served on special occasions. Eaten with rice, the **daïiong** is a delicious dal made by cooking yellow lentils with black sesame paste.

CHUTNEYS

Chutneys go with most rice dishes in Meghalayan cuisine. **Tungtap** is a delicious dry fish chutney. Onions are roasted until they char, giving out a smoky ooze, and are mixed with ghost chillies and the fish

and served as a spicy condiment. **Tungrymbai** is a pungent chutney made of fermented soyabeans mixed in black sesame seed paste.

FISH & MEAT

Nakham bitchi is a popular dried fish-based soupy dish. A favourite pairing is **dohneiong** and sticky rice. It is made by roasting black sesame seeds, cooked with succulent pieces of pork belly and spices, mainly black pepper. The sesame seeds lend a dark colour as well as a nutty flavour.

Dohneiong is pork with black sesame





GARO HILLS

Why Go?

Rich in rustic character, ancient myths and legends and natural beauty, the Garo Hills offer an undiluted back-to-nature holiday. Dramatic vistas – mostly green and sometimes fractured by a sinuous river – and hamlets of the Garo tribes, make the region a wonderfully secluded find.

i Quick Facts

GETTING THERE

Tura, the best base to explore the Garo Hills, lies 219km from the Guwahati Airport. From the airport, cabs to Tura are available. A helicopter service Guwahati–Tura (60mins; ₹1700) runs on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; but this has limited seating and is dependent on the weather. The nearest railhead is in the north at Mendipathar, but many still prefer Guwahati as the node.

NH31 and NH217 connect Guwahati to Tura, via excellent roads, with plenty of highway pit stops in the middle. Book cabs for travel within Garo (p59).

WHEN TO GO

Oct–Mar

GREAT FOR



Travels to the Garo Hills bring the visitor close to the local way of life

📍 Sights

Nokrek National Park

The Nokrek Biosphere Reserve includes Nokrek, the highest peak of the Garo Hills, at 1,412 metres above sea level. Its steep slopes with deciduous forest cover are hard to climb – opt for a 4-wheel drive to go up. This is best visited with local assistance (p59). Located 2km from here is the Tura peak (872m) that awards panoramic views of the undulating green valleys below.

Balapakram National Park

A deep gorge, located in South Garo Hills has a number of trekking routes, and traditional hamlets inside. Balapakram town and some tented accommodation are your only options for an overnight stay (Contact Vikash Sangma ☎8415099951). Heavily guarded border posts punctuate the road,

skirting the Bangladesh border. ₹50, camera/video ₹50/500; sunrise–sunset

Baghmara Reserve Forest

Located 4km from Balpakram, the reserve forest is a hotspot for elephants, along with many other species of birds, animals, reptiles and the famous pitcher plant. Secure prior permission from DFOs of Wildlife West, East Garo Hills, and South Garo Hills to visit Baghmara and Nokrek (megtourism.gov.in/tourismoffices.html)

Entry free; sunrise–sunset

Chibragare

This picturesque confluence of the Ganol and Rongram rivers, 9km from Tura, has become a popular weekend picnic spot. Watch out for traffic snarls on Sundays.

₹10; 9am–5pm

📍 Top Tip: Wildlife

The Garo Hills abound in a wide variety of animal species, including some of the rarest in the world. **Nokrek** is home to elephants and India's only ape species – the hoolock gibbon (also found in West Garo's **Selbagre Hoolock Gibbon Reserve**).

Balpakram has tigers, leopards, black bears and the rare red panda. Herds of elephants can be spotted in **Baghmara's** thick forests. For bird lovers, the **Siju Bird Sanctuary** in South Garo houses the migratory Siberian duck, the grey hornbill and the peacock pheasant.



Pelga Dare

A cheerful picnic spot, Pelga Dare lies 7km from Tura town on the Ganol River. Cross a bamboo and wire bridge over the gushing river to reach the spot.

Sunrise–sunset

Siju Caves

The Siju Caves have dramatic stalagmites and stalactites. One of the longest cave systems in the sub-continent, it is home to some of the finest river passages. The limestone rocks are a hook for Siberian ducks who migrate close to the caves. Rains can hamper access.

₹10, camera/guide 50/200; sunrise–sunset

Chandigre

Nestled between tea and coffee plantations Chandigre Rural Resort features four well-kept cottages on manicured gardens. A day followed by a night's halt gives you ample time to visit the village and unwind.

☎9862682257; Chandigre; entry ₹30; d ₹1000

🏠 Accommodation &

🍴 Eating

Hotel Polo Orchid

HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎3651 232082; www.hotelpolotowers.com; opp Central School, Arai Mile; d deluxe/premier/executive ste/presidential ste ₹3800/4800/5850/7850 Pick the better-lit first floor rooms that overlook areca plantations, though

✅ Top Tip: Safety, travel agents & cabs

Avoid travel at night and go with known people around Garo Hills.

Tourism offices: Tura and Baghmara ☎8794283702

Book cabs from Guwahati to Tura (approx ₹4000).

Sapna Travels ☎9864052237

Blue Hills ☎9954337430

Air Rover ☎9836308080

Ranjay Prasad ☎9436711260

all the rooms are spacious. Executive and upwards have a separate seating area. The clean rooms make up for the old styled bathrooms and fittings. The in-house restaurant, Ginger (7am–9pm) offers multi-cuisine fare.

Hotel Rikman

HOTEL ₹₹

☎3651 220744; Tura; d presidential ste/executive ac/business/economy ₹4300/2600/1750/1499 Ideal for travellers on a tight budget, the hotel is walking distance from bus and taxi stands and the markets.

Hotel Sundare

HOTEL ₹₹

☎3651224721; Circular Rd; d executive ste/deluxe/standard/deluxe non ac/ ₹2800/2000/1700/1700 Bang in the middle of the Tura market, the hotel is a practical, budget accommodation with clean rooms and bathrooms and a multi-cuisine restaurant (noon–8.30pm).



JAINTIA HILLS

Why Go?

Jaintia Hills may not be one of Meghalaya's main tourist circuits, but Dawki and Shnongpdeng come to the rescue with their pastoral landscape bordering Bangladesh as well as the near-transparent Umngot River. Travellers are recommended to club these locations with Cherrapunjee rather than Jaintia's headquarter city of Jowai.

i Quick Facts

GETTING THERE

Get to Shillong and then drive 66km to Jowai. Guwahati is the closest railhead, 103km from Shillong. Cabs are available from the airport and the railway station to drive up to Jowai (approx non AC/AC ₹3000/₹4000). The preferred travel circuit is from Cherrapunjee to Dawki, which is only 85km away. Cabs are best booked from Shillong itself. Even locally, non AC/AC are ₹2000/₹2500 per day.

WHEN TO GO

Nov–Feb

GREAT FOR



The Krang Suri Falls offer many photo opportunities

📍 Sights

Blue Hills Waterfall

Catch the white sheet of water plunging down from a wide stone escarpment from the edge of the Mawlynngong–Dawki road. There is a viewing pavilion right next to the bridge.

Dawki

The border town of the Khasi Jaintia Hills and Bangladesh is famous for the stunning **Umngot River** that is as clear as glass in the winter months. Since images of boats seemingly suspended in mid-air surfaced on the internet, the boatmen now charge ₹500 per boat for an hour-long ride in the local fishermen's dinghy. At Dawki, go upstream along the sandy riverside banks, stopping at the shanties for a cup of tea. Downstream takes you to the Bangladesh side, which is a crowded and busy picnic spot.

The Nartiang Durga Temple is a Shakti peetha



📍8731840915 (Lang Lang); Dec–Feb is when the water is clearest; d tents ₹1000 for a riverside camp

Shnongpdeng

Shnongpdeng is 8km from the main road. The flat waters of the river reflecting the low mountains and trees make for a surreal mirror impression. The Bright Sun shop (7am–7pm) in the parking area marks the point from where one needs to walk below to the river beach, where boating and camping kiosks are located. Check with Pioneer Adventure Tours (p22) for more exclusive camping experiences along the Umngot River.

Vehicle ₹30; camp/kayak/boat ₹700/200/100; 7am–sunset

Krang Suri Waterfalls

Located 31km from Jowai, the Krang Suri waterfalls are in a wide valley close to Amlarem town. Reach the parking via a rocky, uneven plateau. Walk down wide short steps and stop at a midway pavilion for pictures.

Sunrise–sunset

Kiang Nongbah Monument

The monument lies adjacent to the river Myntdu. The regal structure commemorates the martyrdom of U Kiang Nangbah who fought against colonial rule.

Tyrshi Falls

Drive off the main Jowai–Shillong road on a bumpy dirt path that

opens out onto the flat of a hill with a pine forest. From here, walk along a pathway across a field to reach Tyrshi Falls.

Nartiang Monoliths

The most impressive collection of monoliths in one single area is found in Nartiang (26km from Jowai). The menhirs known as Moo Shynrang and dolmens (flat stones placed horizontally) called Moo Kynthai date back to AD 1500–1835. The tallest menhir commemorates the victory of U Mar Phalyngki (a lieutenant of the Jaintia King) in a battle.

Nartiang Durga Temple

The temple is adjacent to the ruins of the Summer Palace of the erstwhile Jaintia king. The temple is a Shakti peetha, a shrine dedicated to the cult of the Goddess Sati, and is one of the 51 Shakti peethas for Hindus. Legend has it that the goddess' left thigh fell on this spot. Sunrise–sunset

🏠 Accommodation &

🍴 Eating

GHM

GUESTHOUSE ₹

📍7638932801; Jowai Bypass, Caroline Colony, Jowai; d ₹2000–2500 Pick GHM for its spacious rooms and clean bathrooms. GHM supersedes expectations in a small town like Jowai. The in-house restaurant (11am–8pm) serves mixed cuisine.

✓ Top Tip: Shillong as a base

The West Jaintia Hills are adjacent to the East Khasi Hills. Leave Mawlynngong village (Khasi Hills), swing through the southern border towns of Dawki and Shnongpdeng and then loop back to Shillong. This can be done over two days.

Tyrchi Inn

HOTEL ₹

📍7629909655; Khliehtyrchi; d from ₹2000/₹2500 Tyrchi Inn is named after the neighbouring waterfall in the West Jaintia Hills. The roadside hotel has six clean rooms and an in-house restaurant (10am–9.30pm).

Orchid Inn

HOTEL ₹

📍9856003662; Jowai–Shillong Rd; d ₹1680/1807/2428 A well-trodden highway hotel. Orchid offers 10 rooms, with a view of the Thadlaskein Lake. An in-house restaurant (11am–10pm) ensures that you don't have to step out for meals.

Highwinds Lakeside

HOTEL ₹

📍8794714109; Thadlaskein, Mukhla Village; d from ₹1500 The state-run Highwinds has two rooms overlooking the Thadlaskein Lake. It's convenient for a night's pit stop, thanks to the in-house restaurant (11am–9.30pm) and clean rooms.

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