

Highlights of the Northeast – 11 days

Tour JTT-ASNA01: Dibrugarh – Digboi – Sivsagar – Jorhat – Majuli Island – Kohima – Kaziranga – Guwahati

India's Northeast: Hot spot of cultural and biodiversity

The Northeast, also known as the Seven Sisters of India (comprising the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya), is the least visited of the regions – tucked away in a remote corner of the country, bordered by China in the north, Myanmar (Burma) in the east and Bangladesh in the south and west it is almost a separate country joined to mainland India by what we term as the chicken's neck, just a few square kilometers of land in its western border. Geographically, it is amazing – the great Himalayas to the north, the Assam valley carved out by the mighty River Brahmaputra, one of the greatest rivers in the world, the beautiful Khasi and Jaintia Hills in the south and the Patkai range in the east makes for a natural splendour difficult to find elsewhere.



With the varied terrain comes the most exotic of people and tribes that live in its hills and plains. The northeast has been described by anthropologists as a “melting pot” or the “witches’ cauldron” signifying the hordes of people that came into it over the centuries and made it their home. Mongoloids, Austro-Africans, Tibeto-Burmese have all found a place here to live in harmony and peace. Inter-tribe or religious conflict is rare in these parts.

Because of the altitudinal difference many kinds of wild life thrives here. The one-horned rhino is the best mascot one can think of if you are referring to (wild) life in the Northeast. And so is the majestic Hornbill, the iconic bird of the hills. It would not be very off the mark if we were to describe the sanctuaries and national parks of the Northeast as 'teeming with wild life' and a 'natural aviary'. In Kaziranga National Park, A World Heritage Site, alone there are 500 bird species recorded. This park also holds the distinction as the place where 20th century's greatest Indian conservation success story was scripted. From a mere dozen rhinos in the early 1900s the figure went up to more than 1600 by the year 2000. Now the total count of rhinos stand at more than 2200!

Another marked feature in Assam are the well-kept tea gardens – for miles on end one can see a green carpet shaded against the fierce sun by a canopy of Acacia trees. Oil was struck in Assam in the 1800s and one can still visit the oil town of Digboi to see the first oil well and also a very interesting oil museum.

We have devised an itinerary that allows you to get a glimpse of all that is described above. We have selected your accommodation carefully, to give you the feel of the places visited, and at the same time, have all the comforts you deserve. For example, at Dibrugarh and Jorhat you will stay at heritage tea bungalows; at Kohima in Nagaland in an old house of the Angami tribe converted into a comfortable lodge; at Kaziranga it is a lodge built in the style of a local tribal dwelling with first class accommodation. In Shillong, Darjeeling and Sikkim it is the same philosophy – letting you stay at places with character and comfort.



Itinerary

Day 01: Dibrugarh

On arrival Dibrugarh (daily flights from Delhi and Kolkata) you'll be greeted by our staff and transferred to Mancotta Heritage Tea Bungalow on the outskirts of Dibrugarh town, set amidst a tea garden. In the afternoon we go on a tea tour where experts from the tea company explain all about tea plantation and manufacturing – you are visiting a working tea estate.

Day 02: Dibrugarh – Digboi – Dibrugarh

After breakfast drive out 80 km to Digboi, the oil town where the world's oldest operating oil refinery still lugs on. You can see a very well maintained oil museum depicting its history and also some old



machinery and equipment as also the first oil well dug here back in the 1800s. Visit the nearby WW II cemetery maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission – dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the Allied forces fighting the Japanese onslaught in 1944. This is the area from where supplies of men and material were air lifted to Southwest China when the Burma Road was cut off by the Japanese. We return to Dibrugarh for overnight and dinner.

Day 03: Dibrugarh – Sivasagar – Jorhat

Breakfast over, we set off for Jorhat, 140 km/ 3 hours (driving time). On the way we visit Sivasagar, the capital of the Ahom kings who ruled Assam for 600 years (1228 – 1826 AD). We visit some of the ruins from this period – the Rang Ghar or the Amphitheater, the Talatal/ Kareng Ghar or the multi-storeyed palace, as well as the Shiva dol (temple) said to be the tallest Shiva temple in the country. Be amazed by the huge tank beside the temple, again believed to be one of the largest hand excavated tanks in the world.

We proceed to Jorhat, where we check into Banyan Grove – a more than 170 year old charming property located inside a tea estate. You can spend time in its manicured lawns, splash around in the pool or play a round of golf (there's a 18 hole golf course nearby).

Day 04: Jorhat – Majuli Island – Jorhat

It's a short distance to Neematighat, the jetty on the River Brahmaputra. Here, we board a ferry on the Brahmaputra and sail for 1.5 hours to Majuli Island, the largest inhabited river island in the world. Majuli has already been short listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for culture for its 'satriya' or Hindu Vaishnavite monastic culture preserved in the 'satras' or Hindu monasteries.



After landing visit 'Satra's, meet the 'bhakats' or monks, take a close look at their way of living, be enthralled by a 'satriya' or monastic dance performed by the bhakats in one of the satras.

Majuli Island has this unique Hindu 'satriya' culture for which it is well known and very difficult to find in pure form elsewhere. UNESCO has shortlisted Majuli for the World Heritage Site for Culture tag. Its pristine and unpolluted environment is another feature that attracts people. Add to this the tribal culture of the Misings and Deoris and the fantastic bird life, and you have more than you can look forward to while on the island. We take the late afternoon ferry back to Neematighat and drive into your bungalow. Evening free.

Day 05: Jorhat – Kohima

Kohima (4300 ft) was attacked by the Japanese in April 1944 and a fierce battle ensued. The allied forces included British, American and Indian soldiers who fought gallantly and after an initial setback could push the Japanese back and down the Naga hills on

the Burma side. Many perished on both sides. There is a poignant war memorial in Kohima dedicated to the fallen heroes with the famous inscription:

When you go home
Tell them of us
And say
For their tomorrow
We gave our today

We drive to Kohima today, 210 km, 5 hours. Check into Razhu Pru, a Naga heritage property. In the afternoon we visit the Second World War memorial and the very interesting local market where villagers residing nearby sell vegetables, fish, all kinds of meat and also worms and caterpillars that are a delicacy with the locals.

Day 06: At Kohima

In the morning we visit Khonoma village of the Angami tribe, 20 km one way, known for its valour and courage – this village has never been subjugated by anyone, not even by the British who had a long and protracted battle and ultimately had to sign a treaty giving autonomy to the village. In the afternoon we drive short distance to Kisama and take a tour of the WW II museum that gives you a very good insight into the war.

Day 07: Kohima – Kaziranga National Park

We drive down to the plains of Assam and onto Kaziranga (220 km/ 5 hours), where we check into Iora Resort. This comfortable lodge has lush gardens, a swimming pool and two restaurants, one especially for Assamese cuisine.

In the afternoon we take an open-jeep safari in the western range of the park. Kaziranga is the world's best place to view the one-horned (Indian) rhino and a World Heritage Site for nature.

Day 08: At Kaziranga

At the break of dawn we ride on elephants in the central range of the park. The trained *mahouts* will take you very close to the rhinos. Kaziranga is also well known for its bird life with almost 500 species recorded. Wild buffalo, deer, elephants make this park a



favorite for the wild life enthusiast. Return to the lodge for breakfast. Relax in your comfortable surroundings and in the afternoon take another jeep safari in another range of the park.

Day 09: Kaziranga – Guwahati, 220 km/ 5 hours

We drive to Guwahati, and check into Hotel Radisson Blue. In the afternoon we visit the Kalakshetra, a sprawling enclosure depicting cultures and traditions of Northeast India with an interesting museum.

Day 10: Guwahati

In the morning we visit the famous 'shakti' temple Kamakhya. Do a round of the temple and proceed to the riverfront to take a short ferry ride to Peacock Island to visit Umananda temple. This is one of the smallest islands on the River Brahmaputra with the temple sitting on the top. There is a pathway round the temple and the island – you can spot the very rare and endangered Golden Langur on this island. Return to the city and head to The Paradise restaurant for authentic Assamese cuisine served in brass crockery. *(Assamese cuisine is a little bland then normal Indian food; both veg and non-veg dishes are available)*

After lunch visit the state museum (Mondays, second Saturdays and public holidays closed) and the various emporia selling handloom and handicrafts.



Day 11: Guwahati Airport

Transfer to Guwahati airport. We bid you goodbye at the airport.

Tour Price

2 pers. INR 122.500 pp.

3 pers. INR 117.250 pp.

4 pers. INR 113.250 pp.

Single supplement 28.500

Max. 3 persons per vehicle.

Price includes: Accommodation on twin share at the indicated places, full board; all transfers and sightseeing as per itinerary by vehicle specified; one English speaking escort throughout the tour; game drives in Kaziranga national park; still camera fees at Kaziranga national park; traditional dances as specified; local guides where necessary;

one bottle of mineral water per person per day; all entrance and monument fees, fresh fruits everyday; candies/ chocolates/ wafers on drives/ transfers.

Not included: Airfare both international and domestic; camera charges (other than still camera); tips; drinks; laundry; telephone calls; insurance; expenses of personal nature.

Hotels and lodges used:

Dibrugarh – Mancotta Tea Bungalow
Jorhat – Sangsua Burra Sahib's Bungalow
Kohima – Razhu Pru Heritage Home
Kaziranga – Diphlu River Lodge
Guwahati – Hotel Dynasty