

Festivals & mountains of Manipur & Nagaland

Climb Mt. Saramati, visit Hornbill & Sangai Festival – 22 days/9 walking

Tour JTT-NAMA-W01 (walking): Imphal – Loktak Lake – Ukhrul – Kohima - Meluri - Pungro – Trek up Mt. Saramati – Tuensang – Mokokchung – Gibbon Sanctuary - Jorhat

Activities & sights: tribal festivals, tribal villages & culture, walking & short trek, tea estates.

Fixed dates: Nov 23 – Dec. 14



The far-eastern states of Nagaland and Manipur are due outside the tourist circuits. Manipur is even India's least visited state. That's not because there is nothing to see. The mountains are lush green thanks to abundance of rain and harbor some very fine subtropical forests and supreme mountain vistas. The Nagas, though once upon a time fierce warriors and even head-hunters, a tradition that lives on in a peaceful manner in their culture, are known for their hospitality. Originally adhering to animistic beliefs, these days most people of Nagaland and Manipur have been converted to Christianity, though in Manipur Hinduism has rooted as well.

During festivals their vibrant ancient culture comes to life in war and harvest dances performed in utterly exotic and colourful costumes. Each of the 45 tribes of Nagaland and Manipur has its own different traditional wear and dances. On this trip we visit two of the most colourful and well-organised festivals of the Northeast: the well-known Hornbill Festival in Kohima (Nagaland) and the much less know Sangai Festival in Imphal (Manipur). The latter is named after a rare species of marsh-dwelling deer found only in Manipur.

Last but not least, this is a *walking trip*. We'll do day walks to and through small remote villages in the Naga and Manipur mountains and climb the 3841 m high Mt. Saramati, a moderately strenuous 3-day trek. This is Nagaland's highest mountain. It sits right on the border with Birma and once we scale it we'll be presented with sweeping views of Birmese Nagaland.

Itinerary

Day 01: Arrival at Delhi

At Delhi Airport you will be received by our representative and taken to your guesthouse not far from the airport for overnight stay.



Day 02: Flight Delhi - Imphal

From Delhi we arrive by flight at Imphal in the state of Manipur. Our guide will receive you at the airport and accompany you to your hotel. In the afternoon you can visit the Ima or 'all mothers' market in the city. This is where you see Manipuri women selling traditional wares sitting on raised platforms.

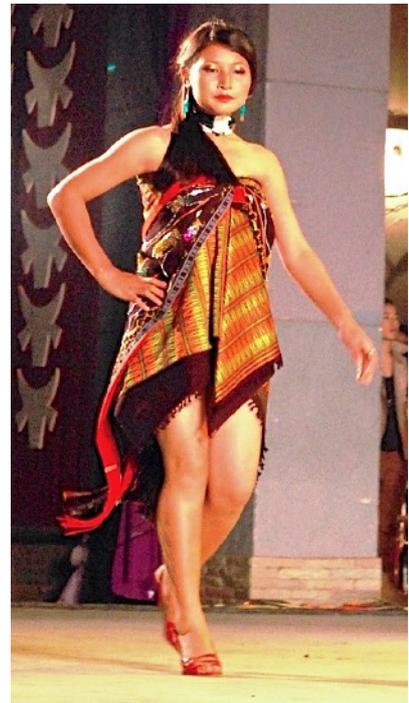
Day 03: Loktak Lake and Keibu Lemjao N.P. Afternoon at the Sangai Festival

Today you visit the famous floating lake of Loktak – the weeds in the lake entwine themselves to form large round floating islands strong enough to withstand the weight of humans and animals! We go over to the nearby Keibul Lamjao national park where the rare 'Sangai' live. These deer forage on the floating vegetation and because of this manouvring act are called the 'dancing deer' of Manipur. The festival you are attending in Imphal is named after this animal.

Day 04: At the Sangai Festival

Sangai Festival

The sangai Festival is a nine-day event showcasing the Manipuri culture, folk dances (both ritualistic and recreational) and especially the dance art called Meitei Dance. This is a devotional dance art that is seen as one of India's classical dance forms. Apart from a whole array of tribal costumes and dances you'll also witness something that is best described as an indigenous fashion show. Local young people - women, men and couples - dress up in attire that is based on the traditional dress but modified in a modern, often surprisingly sexy fashion. We have two days at the festival, during which there is time for other activities as well.



In the morning we visit the popular Shree Govindaji Temple, the local museum and WW II cemeteries of both the allied and Japanese forces. In the afternoon we attend the Sangai festival.

Day 05: Imphal – Ukhrul (90 km/ 3 hr)

In the morning we drive to Ukhrul, northeast of Imphal. After lunch at the hotel we'll explore this small town on foot, visiting the local market, and make a short walk through rural areas outside town.

Day 06: Ukhrul



Today will be a serious walking day. We'll drive to a short distance to a small village called Khangkhui Khullen at 2020 m asl. From here we'll walk up to Siroy Peak (2835 m). As this is a long day walk (23 kms up and down) those who like to keep it shorter can turn around half way. Even then you'll enjoy good views of these mountains on the Birmese border. Siroy Peak is where the famous Siroy Lily is found. It blooms in May and June.

Day 07: Ukhrul

Today we'll visit some villages in the surroundings of Ukhrul inhabited by Tangkhul Naga, the main inhabitants of the area.

Day 08: Ukhrul – Imphal (90 km/ 3 hr)

We drive back to Imphal. Overnight at hotel in Imphal.

Day 09: Imphal – Kohima (147 km/ 5 - 6 hr)

We drive north to Kohima crossing the Manipur-Nagaland border at Mao, and continue on to Kisama, the venue of the Hornbill Festival which is 13 km short of Kohima. We spend some time here and proceed to our hotel.

Hornbill Festival

The Hornbill festival is an indigenous, exotic, extraordinary event. Organised by the State Directorate of Tourism every year between December 1 and 7 in Kohima, the festival is intended to revive, protect and preserve the richness and uniqueness of the Naga heritage. At

this festival, one can see a fascinating melange of Naga cultural displays all at one place. The festival is also a tribute to the hornbill, a bird most admired by the Naga people for its qualities of alertness and grandeur. The awe and admiration for the bird is symbolically displayed in almost all traditional tribal headgears worn during festivities. Local handicrafts and handlooms, ranging from bamboo products to intricately woven traditional



garments are on display at the festival, including organic fruits and vegetables. Stalls with an array of tempting Naga dishes help to lure food lovers as well.

Day 10: At the Hornbill Festival

Whole day will be spent at the festival.

Day 11: Khnoma Village

Option of visiting Khnoma village to the west of Kohima or the ousthern Angami villages of Kigwema and Zakhama. Afternoon at the Hornbill Festival.

Day 12: Kohima – Meluri (160 km/ 6 - 7 hr)

We are heading east and a small part of the way will be through northern Manipur. On arrival at Meluri we check into the government lodge. Late afternoon walk in the surroundings, you may come across the Chakhesang tribesmen wearing traditional attire in the local market.

Day 13: Meluri – Pungro (100 km/ 4 hr)

Driving northeast we reach Pungro town. The main tribe of the area is the Yimchunger with a few Sumi tribes also having their settlements. These are both Naga tribes. Overnight at the New Tourist Lodge.

Day 14: Pungro – Salumi – Thanamir (40 km/ 2 hr)

We start early today and after a short distance we stop at the village of Salumi. A short walk brings us to a large natural cave. Driving on we reach the settlement of Thanamir (2050 m) where we disembark. This is where the treks starts. We can stretch our legs in the surroundings while the porters pitch our tents. Overnight in tents.

Day 15: TREK Thanamir – Water Point (10 km/ 5 hr walking)



From Thanamir we gradually trek through half-open country with fields, pastures and remnant forests to a place named 'Water Point' (2700 m) appx 10 km/ 5 hrs. Overnight in tents.

Day 16: TREK Water Point – Mt. Saramati – Waterpoint (20 km/ 7 hr walking)

The distance from Waterpoint to Mt Saramati (3841 m) is approx. 10 km, on which you climb about 1150 m. Most of the climb is gradual, but there are a few steep sections. However, the climb is nowhere technical. Mt. saramati is a 'walkable mountain.' On a clear day you get very

good views of Nagaland and of 'Birmese Nagaland' on the other side (the Chin State). We return to Water Point for overnight.

Day 17: TREK Water Point – Thanamir (10 km/ 3 hr)

We walk down to Thanamir, where we board the vehicles and drive to Pungro.

Day 18: Drive to Tuensang via Kiphire and Kuthur (145 km/ 5 - 6 hr)

Today's drive is through villages of the Yimchunger and Chang tribes. We will stop at some of their villages. On arrival at Kuthur we check into the local government lodge.

Day 19: Tuensang – Mokokchung (85 km/ 4 hr)

In the morning we will visit a Chang village near Tuensang and then proceed to Mokokchung. On the way we will stop at a village again of the Chang tribe. On reaching Mokokchung we will check into Tourist Lodge. Afternoon at the local market.

Day 20: Mokokchung

After a number of 'driving days' it is time for some walking. We will walk in two villages today. First we will travel north by vehicle to the village of Mopungchuket. Here we start walking towards the village center. You can see a Moring or a male dormitory of the Ao Naga here. From here proceed to the other end of the town and climb a watch tower named after the legendary lovers of this village, Jina and Etiben.

We return to Mokokchung and in the afternoon drive/ walk 16 km to the village of Longkhum. It has commanding views to all sides and was an Ao Naga bastion and held the surrounding Ao

villages from attack by neighbouring tribes during the head-hunting days. We drive back to Mokokchung. For dinner and overnight at the Tourist Lodge.



Day 21: Mokokchung – Jorhat (103 km/ 3 ½ hr)

We leave the hills and descend to Jorhat in Assam. Before reaching Jorhat we veer to the east to visit Gibbon Sanctuary. This wildlife reserve has a large population of the endemic (only found in Assam and Bhutan) Hoolock Gibbon, an ape species. We'll explore the jungle on foot with a forest guard. Apart from Hoolock Gibbons there are many species of colourful, and often large bird species, such as the great and pied hornbill. Wild elephants and several species of deer can be seen as well. After the 45 min drive to Jorhat we check into a 3 star hotel, which will be a welcome change after many days of simple government lodges and camping.

Day 22: Flight Jorhat or Dibrugarh - Delhi

Early morning you are being transferred to Jorhat Airport for the flight to New Delhi. In case your flight passes through Guwahati (stop-over) make sure to sit on the right hand side of the aircraft, as you may be awarded with great views of the Himalayas.

Tour Price

For 2, 3 persons: INR 186,000 per person, using 1 Tata Sumo Victa (SUV)
For 4, 5 persons: INR 183,000 per person, using 2 Tata Sumo Victa (SUV)
For 6 – 9 persons: INR 177,000 per person, using 3 Tata Sumo Victa (SUV)
For 10 persons: INR 173,000 per person, using 4 Tata Sumo Victa (SUV)

Single supplement: INR 57,000

Above tour price is on current rates only. Some properties have not yet decided and declared their new tariff. Tour price may rise in case of fuel price hike as well.

Price includes: Flights Delhi - Dibrugarh and Dibrugarh/Jorhat – Delhi, English speaking escort throughout, all transfers by Tata Sumo, all accommodation in twin sharing, all meals (day 01 lunch till day 21 breakfast), fuel and driver allowance, entrée fees for Sangai and Hornbill festival, village visits, local guide whenever necessary, daily bottle of mineral water, government tax.

Price excludes: International air fare, overnight stay at Delhi if required, tips, laundry, alcoholic beverages, insurance and any other expenses of personal nature.