

HAPPY
NEW
YEAR

NEWSLETTER
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In The East

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DIRECTOR'S DESK



*Dear Travel Partners,
Happy New Year.*

The new year deserves a beginning that is symbolic, grounded, and forward-looking. So this January, we start not with noise—but with light, as we step into the year ahead and choose to begin where India awakens first each day, at Dong Valley in Arunachal Pradesh. Long before the rest of the country stirs, dawn breaks quietly here, reminding us that progress doesn't always arrive loudly; sometimes, it simply arrives first—calm, purposeful, and rooted.

This thought defines how we see travel in the East and Northeast—authentic, unhurried, and respectful of people and place. Dong Valley reflects the journeys we believe in: moving beyond checklists to create deeper connections with landscapes, communities, and living cultures.

This philosophy was recently reaffirmed with the ATOAI Explorer Award, an honour that recognises opening new routes and responsibly bringing lesser-known regions like Dong, Walong, and Anjaw into the travel narrative. For us, it is both recognition and responsibility.

As January unfolds, the region comes alive with contrast—from the first sunrise in Arunachal to the vibrant celebrations of Chapchar Kut in Mizoram, alongside new infrastructure, revived trails, and thoughtfully curated experiences across the East.

As the sun rises first in Dong Valley, it sets the tone for the year ahead:
Begin early. Begin thoughtfully. Begin with purpose.

With Best Regards,
Amit Periwal
Director

Important Sunday Travel Update – Site Closures in Meghalaya

Every Sunday, Mawlynnong & Dawki (boating suspended), Laitlum Grand Canyon, Nong-jrong Sunrise View Point, and the Double Decker Root Bridge remain closed to visitors.

FESTIVAL WATCH: CULTURE IN FULL BLOOM

CHAPCHAR KUT

As spring arrives in Mizoram, Chapchar Kut is celebrated as a joyful festival marking the completion of jhum field clearing before the sowing season. Rooted in agrarian tradition, it is a time of rest, happiness, and community bonding after months of hard work.

Villages come alive with colorful traditional attire, folk music, and graceful dances. The highlight is the iconic Cheraw bamboo dance, symbolizing rhythm, unity, and cultural pride, offering travelers a vibrant glimpse into Mizoram's rich heritage and hill-life traditions.

Mizoram's Springtime Cultural Festival (6th March, 2026)



Route Program

Day
01

Arrival in Aizawl



Welcome to the charming hill city! Settle in and soak up your first views of the rolling landscapes.

Day
03

Aizawl



Enjoy a full day of festivities combined with local sightseeing, markets, and culinary delights.

Day
02

Aizawl



Visit the festival ground and feel the rhythm of Mizoram's traditional celebration.

Day
04

Aizawl



Leisure day for personal exploration or shopping before departure.



Best Time to Visit

The festival season (late February or early March) is the highlight, but Aizawl remains a treat from October to March, when the weather is cool, clear, and perfect for exploration.



Our Recommended Stays in Aizawl

- Hotel Regency – Comfort, elegance, and class define this top-rated property – the best available in the city.
- Royale Lalawi Hotel – Modern amenities, friendly service, and delicious food come together for a truly cozy and affordable stay.

Embrace the colors, culture, and charm of Mizoram – where every moment feels like a celebration!

Celebrate Chapchar Kut, Mizoram's most vibrant festival that marks the completion of jhum cultivation with dazzling dances, music, and feasts. Experience the state's rich cultural spirit and community warmth in full bloom every March.



Travel Tips

- Plan ahead: Chapchar Kut draws many visitors, so book flights and hotels early and arrange your Inner Line Permit (ILP) before arrival.
- Dress comfortably: Evenings can be cool in Aizawl – carry light jackets and wear comfortable shoes for walking and festival visits.
- Be culturally mindful: Respect local traditions, ask before taking photos, and don't miss trying authentic Mizo cuisine during the celebrations.

DESTINATION DECODE: THIS MONTH'S HIDDEN GEM

DONG VALLEY

Tucked away in Arunachal Pradesh's remote Anjaw district, Dong Valley is one of India's most untouched and serene landscapes. Situated near the Lohit and Safu rivers close to the India–China border, it is surrounded by snow-clad mountains, ancient forests, and deep Himalayan silence, far from regular tourist trails.

Dong Valley is best known as the first place in India to witness the sunrise. As dawn breaks, golden light slowly illuminates the rugged terrain and flowing rivers, creating a peaceful, unforgettable moment that captures the raw beauty of the eastern Himalayas.

Where India Wakes
to the First Light



The People & Culture

Dong is home to the Zehang Mishmi community, whose deep connection to the land and rivers defines their way of life. Their bamboo homes, traditional dress, and generous hospitality reflect an enduring respect for nature and tradition. Visiting Dong is more than a journey — it's a glimpse into a world that has changed little over generations.



Best Time to Visit

Between October and April, when the weather is crisp and clear. The landscape comes alive after the monsoon, lush and radiant in autumn light. Avoid December and January, as temperatures drop significantly.



Suggested Route

Day 01 Dibrugarh to Namsai (125 km / 3 hrs)



Day 02 Namsai to Wakro (70 km / 2 hrs)



Day 03 Wakro to Walong (170 km / 4 hrs)



Day 04 Dong to Kaho (35 km / 1 hr)



Day 05 Kaho to Chokham (250 km / 5 hrs)



Day 06 Chokham to Tinsukia (100 km / 3 hrs)



Day 07 Tinsukia to Dibrugarh (55 km / 2 hrs)



Lohit Valley Expedition Route:
Dibrugarh to Kaho

ON THE GROUND: SECTOR-WISE TRAVEL BUZZ



Guwahati Airport Unveils New World-Class Terminal on 20 December 2025

Guwahati Airport's New Terminal Set to Open on 20 December 2025.

The state-of-the-art terminal will enhance passenger comfort and capacity, offering a smoother travel experience for visitors to Northeast India.



Stay in the Heart of Majuli's Heritage

Experience Assamese culture and warm hospitality at Simanta Sankardev Group of Hotels, Garamur — a serene retreat inspired by Srimanta Sankardev's legacy, offering comfort, local cuisine, and the true essence of Majuli.



16-km Tenzing Norgay Trail Revived in Darjeeling

The historic 16-km trail once walked by Tenzing Norgay has been brought back to life, reconnecting Darjeeling's mountaineering legacy with its natural landscapes. Revived during the Darjeeling Mile Trek Fest, the route promises new opportunities for heritage and eco-tourism.



Rannaghор by Sienna Calcutta: Bengal on a Plate, the World at the Table

Rannaghor's intimate tasting menu reimagines Bengali flavours with modern technique, deep research, and storytelling rooted in maati and manush. From market-led ingredients to global plating, this Kolkata kitchen proves Bengal's cuisine is ready for the world.



Hotel Sonar Bangla Mukutmanipur: A New Chapter by the Lake

Formerly Peerless Resort, Mukutmanipur now welcomes guests as Hotel Sonar Bangla, Mukutmanipur. Enjoy serene lakeside views, warm hospitality, and a peaceful getaway crafted the Sonar Bangla way.

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