

LIVING ROOT BRIDGES

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TOUR DETAILS		Duration
		6 days
HIGHLIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax in the charming hill-station of Shillong • Marvel at the incredible Living Root Bridges • Drive through Waterfall Country • Visit Mawphlang's Sacred Forest 		
Off The Beaten Track Rating	● ● ● ● ●	Activity Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Drive to Shillong (from Guwahati if taking a standalone trip or from Kaziranga if adding this to the end of one of our longer North East India tours). Freshen up at hotel, then take a walk around the busy bazaar getting a feel for this modern hill station. Take your pick from a selection of excellent restaurants and spend the rest of the evening at ease. Overnight in Shillong. Meal plan: B,L

DAY 2 Known as the "Scotland of the East", Meghalaya is one of India's hidden paradises. Shillong, the former summer capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam, has a host of sights to satisfy all travellers. After a leisurely breakfast, discover why Shillong has a reputation for its mix of modern and traditional way of life and renowned for its fantastic climate and natural beauty. Drive close to and walk the remaining distance to stunning Shillong Peak and take in panoramic views of the city. Move on to picturesque Ward Lake and the nearby botanical garden. Grab a bite at one of Shillong's many food stops. Later in the day, watch the famous archers of Shillong, as they fire their arrows across a pitch into bamboo-like cylinders. The city is abuzz with people betting on the outcome. (Note, this is dependent on archery taking place, as there aren't always fixed days). Enjoy dinner and the nightlife of Shillong. Overnight in Shillong. Meal plan: B,L

Known as the "Scotland of the East", Meghalaya is one of India's hidden paradises. Shillong, the former summer capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam between 1874 and 1972 has a host of sights to satisfy all travellers. Due to its 1496 metre altitude, it maintains a cool climate. Shillong Peak is the highest point in the state at 1965 metres above sea level. 10km from the city, it overlooks the whole of Shillong. Shillong was planned around Ward Lake (Polok's Lake to locals) – an artificial lake, and a pretty heart of the city with its ornamental bridge. It is perfect for walking and boating. Siat Khamis is a sport in which Khasi men fire hundreds of arrows across a pitch into bamboo-like cylinders. The city is abuzz with people betting on the outcome.

DAY 3 Set off after breakfast for Cherrapunjee, the wettest place on earth. En-route stop off at spectacular waterfalls, including famous Elephant Falls and Sati Falls. Drive through Meghalaya's rolling hills, enjoying sublime views of its craggy cliff-faces and rugged flora. Arrive at Cherrapunjee Resort, tucked away in the Southeastern Khasi hills. Relax with chai and snacks in serene surroundings. After resting, take a gentle walk through the local Khasi villages, learn about the local culture and customs. Return for a delicious evening meal. Sit under the stars by the bonfire and look out at the plains of Bangladesh. Overnight in Cherrapunjee. Meal plan: B,L,D

The wettest place on earth, Cherrapunjee falls in the path of the Southwestern Monsoon (Indian Summer). The deep gorges and the Khasi Hills around Cherrapunjee help to funnel and converge the rain-laden clouds over Cherrapunjee. The rain clouds cool due to upward thrust and the airflow from the Himalayan ranges, so they reach higher altitudes, condense and pour on Cherrapunjee. The average annual rainfall at Cherrapunjee is 11,952.2 mm (39.21 feet/ 470.52 inches). 98% of the annual rainfall at Cherrapunjee occurs in between March and October. November, December, January and February receive very little rainfall. Cherrapunjee is home to over 12,000 people.

Khasi culture is quite unique in India, in that the Khasis follow a matrilineal system so after the wedding, the husband moves in with his wife's family and the children take on the surname of the mother.

DAY 4 After a filling breakfast, embark on what must be one of the most spectacular hikes in the world. Walk along the meandering edge of the cliff face and then start the descent downwards, trekking through the lushest green vegetation. Passing small villages on the way, you will be awestruck by the phenomenal Living Root Bridges.

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This unique climate is home to the remarkable Indian rubber tree (ficus elastica) whose incredible properties were discovered by the War-Khasis. They coaxed the roots of these trees across the streams forming these amazing natural bridges. In order to direct the roots in the desired direction, betel nut tree trunks, sliced in the middle for their entire length, are hollowed out and positioned according to the requirement of the bridge. The thin and long tender roots are then passed through these hollowed out betel nut tree trunks. The roots start growing towards the directed end. When they reach the other end of the stream or river, they are allowed to take root in the soil. This process can take up to 15 years, and these bridges can tolerate some 50 people. The most spectacular is the Double Decker Bridge in Nongriat. What better setting for your picnic lunch.

Start the climb back up, stopping off at one of the natural pools for a swim. Wander back through the villages dotted along the hillside back to the Cherrapunjee Resort. Rest your weary limbs and tuck into a well-earned meal. Overnight in Cherrapunjee. Meal plan: B,L,D

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DAY 5 Leisurely start to the day. Leave in the morning for Mawphlang, site of the Sacred Forest. Still revered by locals and an ancient burial site, the Sacred Forest is a treasure trove of unique flora and fauna, with an abundance of aroids, pipers, fern-allies and orchids. Our guide will give you privileged access to this ancient site. Continue onwards to Shillong. Spend the rest of the day exploring Shillong's bustling street, do a bit of souvenir shopping or simply unwind and relax. Overnight in Shillong. Meal plan: B,L

*Still revered by locals and an ancient burial site, **Mawphlang's Sacred Forest** is a treasure trove of unique flora and fauna, with an abundance of **aroids, pipers, fern-allies and orchids**. These are protected from Khasi pine dominating outside the forest by **Castanopsis kurzii** trees around the rim. It has been preserved by traditional religious sanction since the ancient days and contrast greatly to the surrounding grassland.*

DAY 6 Early breakfast, then depart for Guwahati. Catch flight from Guwahati to Delhi or Kolkata, followed by onward flight home (included if booking this trip with flights). Meal plan: B

- END OF SERVICES -

PRICE INCLUDES

All Internal flights

Airport pick-up & drop-off

Ground transport

Drivers and guides

Accommodation

Entrance fees to sites & parks

Activity fees

Most meals (refer to itinerary for meal plan)

Climate Care contribution

ABOUT OUR TRIPS

In addition to our scheduled group departures, **private and tailor-made trips** can be arranged that include some or all of the places on this itinerary. Please contact us with your requirements (e: info@traveltheunknown.com, t: 0845 053 0352) and we will happily put together an itinerary for you and your group. No trip is too long or too short.