

ITINERARIES

THROUGH MOUNTAINS AND CLOUDS



Recommended Length

5 Days



Destinations Covered

Shillong, Sohra, Nongriat, Pynursla,
Shnongpdeng, Mawphlang



Drive Start Time

07:30 AM

A road trip across Meghalaya is exhilarating, not to mention scenic and full of adventure. Be it on a bike or a car, the journey is enthralling. Of the many routes you can take to explore the state, the one leading from its capital Shillong to one of the wettest places on Earth, Cherrapunjee (Cherrapunji or Sohra, as the locals like to call it), stands out owing to the stunning sights and majestic waterfalls on the way. Add the Pynursla region to your itinerary and you have yourself a guarantee of wondrous sights and experiences.

Through Mountains and Clouds

DAY 1: SHILLONG

Explore locations in and around the city



Start

Spot 1
1 Hour



WARD'S LAKE



Start with Ward's Lake, a horseshoe-shaped artificial pool, lying near Raj Bhavan and the accountant general's office. The lake provides shelter to grass carps and gaggles of geese, and you can feed them standing on the bridge that passes over the lake. You can also take a stroll amidst flowerbeds and fairy-lights, and enjoy the greenery in the surrounding. The lake is supplemented by a cafeteria and has boating options for tourists. Spend at least one hour to soak in the attractions and serene scenes here.

CATHEDRAL MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

Make your next stop at the old, imposing church building. It stands as an architectural highlight with its towering arches and stained glass. Half an hour should be good to explore, maybe more if you are into details.



Spot 2
30 Minutes

Spot 3
45 Minutes



SHILLONG PEAK

There is a certain attraction about all-encompassing, panoramic views. Take a 30-minute detour (approximately) to Shillong Peak for a picturesque view of the Shillong city. Perched at an elevation of 1,966 metres, this part overlooking the town can be covered in fog, lending a mystical appearance.

We would suggest 45 minutes to an hour here but photographers like to linger along. The multiple picturesque spots away from the peak point will also tempt you to stop and breathe the fresh cool air.

Close to the Shillong Peak route, you can stop at Sri Mahadev Khola Dham (an approximate six-km drive from the church on the main route). A century-old cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is one of the oldest shrines in the state and is much revered by devotees.

ELEPHANT FALLS



Spot 4
1 Hour



Continue with the journey and reach Elephant Falls. This scenic two-tier fall is enveloped in lush greenery and is a popular picnic spot. It is locally called Ka Kshaid Lai Pateng Khohsiew.

An hour here is a good time.

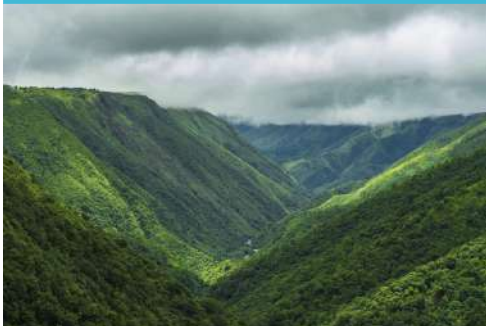
Evening activities in Shillong could include browsing around in the Police Bazaar or hitting one of the city's burgeoning night spots.



DAY 2 – SOHRA

Drive to Sohra. The drive is a very scenic one and road conditions are good.

MAWKDOK-DYMPEP VALLEY VIEW POINT



On the way to Cherrapunjee and about six-minutes away from the caves lies the Mawkdok-Dympep Valley View Point. Sloping hills carpeted in green from either side joining in an almost 'V' shape make for spectacular sightings and photographs.

Half an hour is good here, even more, if you want to try out the ziplining.



Spot 5 30 Minutes



Spot 6 30 Minutes

WAH KABA WATERFALLS

A short drive will take you to the Wah Kaba Waterfalls. Cascading down a cliff into a deep gorge, the roar of this towering waterfall can be heard from a distance. Surrounded by green hills, it is a beautiful sight to behold. Half an hour is an ideal time for this attraction



ARWAH CAVES



Hidden amidst green foliage, this limestone cave boasts stalagmites, stalactites and fossils. The caves are easily accessible by demarcated pathways. It surprises everyone that such a fascinating cave is barely a few kilometres off the busy state highway.

90 minutes is a good time to dedicate to Arwah (including tea in the nearby canteen). Many sections can be explored along with unique formations and fossils to study.



Spot 7
90 Minutes

Spot 8
1 Hour



DAINTHLEN AND WEI-SAWDONG FALLS



Make the Dainthlen and Wei-Sawdong Falls your last stop for the day. The former is a powerful cascade surrounded by river-bed flats and natural rock pools. The latter is a stunning three-tiered waterfall downstream of Dainthlen that requires a short but memorable descent.

Spend the rest of your day (make sure you catch some grub on the highway) exploring these beautiful waterfalls and the terrain around them. Time your drive back to the main route with the sunset – the twilight hues in this open, stream-lined landscape can be mesmerising.

DAY 3 SOHRA – NONGRIAT

Your second day in Sohra should begin with a cup of tea, some local rice-based snacks and a trip to the most storied cascade.



Spot 9
30 minutes



NOHKALIKAI WATERFALLS





Said to be one of the tallest of its kind in the country (about 1,115 ft), it is fed by rainwater, which collects into a pool of green at the bottom. But more interesting is the tragic story of a heartbroken mother, from whom the name of the waterfalls is derived.

DESCENT TO NONGRIAT



The descent to Nongriat should be timed early. As you walk down the slopes from the roadside village of Tyrna, you will enjoy the spectacular scenery of green mountains embracing you like a wall. Rivers and bridges ambush you at many turns and in the base of the valley, one will find the iconic double-decker root bridge. Chill by the cool pools (you deserve it) or if you have some more energy left and it is the right season – head further into the forest trails and visit the Rainbow Falls. Visitors can stay back overnight – that is usually recommended, but if you have a schedule to keep, you can climb back up the same day.

Alternatives

If you are not up for the steep hike down to Nongriat Village, there are several other places around Sohra that you can explore to fill in the day. Seven Sisters Falls with its viewpoint is a nice detour. The short hike to the head of Nohkalikai Falls promises excellent views and diverse landscape.



Spot 10
Half Day



DAY 4 – DRIVE TO PYNURSLA & SHNONGPDENG

It is time to say goodbye to Sohra and hop across the ridge to Pynursla, another riveting road trip awaits you with views of blue valleys and folds of mountains playing with the constantly changing skies and sunlight. Start early.

MAWKYRNOT ROOT BRIDGES



Spot 11
60-90 Minutes

It is difficult to not include Mawkynrot as a special detour in this experience. The root bridges here are also legendary – there are around four or five bunched together in what seems like an old primaeval forest – straight out of a Jurassic Park scene. And the climb down and up is not tough.

Spot 12

Rest of the day



DAWKI – SHNONGPDENG



The scenic Pynursia route takes you to Dawki town, perched on the banks of the pristine Umngot. Head over to Shnongpdeng where you can chill by the river beach or explore some of the nearby trails.

Alternative – We are including Mawlynnong as an alternative since your itinerary already has two iconic living root bridge sites. However, the destination (an hour's drive west of Dawki) is one of Meghalaya's world-famous sites. Apart from the living root bridge, there are several other scenic spots, waterfalls, rock formations, etc.

DAY 5 – THE JOURNEY BACK, SACRED GROVE AND UMIAM LAKE

Take it easy on Day 5. It starts with your last tryst with the scenic mountain roads of East Khasi Hills. Head back north from the borderlands, leaving behind the tropical settings.

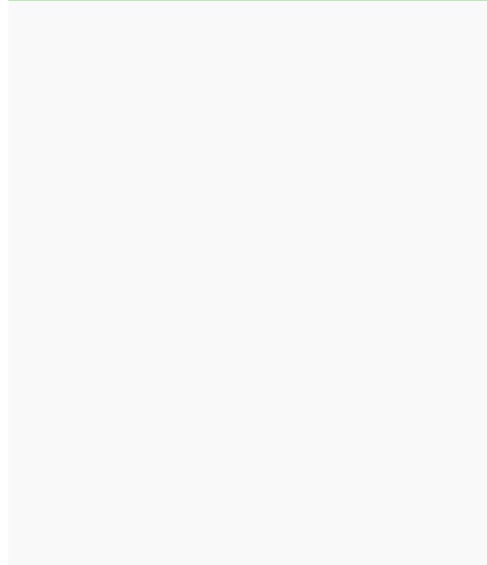


Spot 13

90 Minutes



SACRED GROVE





Hit a detour west, just on the fringes of Shillong. Mawphlang's Sacred Grove is a perfect example of how indigenous Khasi beliefs accommodate modern ideas of nature conservation. These thick forests are sacred sites and need to be explored with a local guide. It is a refreshing walk through a forest that has been undisturbed for centuries. Enjoy the silence and the darkness underneath the canopies of hardwood.

UMIAM LAKE



After all the winding roads, the treks and waterfalls of the previous days – top up your itinerary with gentle views of the Umiyam Lake. It is hard (impossible) to miss, located just outside Shillong on the highway to Guwahati. You may even be tempted to add another day to your itinerary just to spend more time by the shimmering lakeside and watch the hills beyond.



Spot 14
30 Minutes

Best time to travel : This particular itinerary is ideal for the post-monsoon time when the rain-fed waterfalls still have their volume but hiking is also easier. You can also enjoy these spots in winter and spring with a focus on more hikes and landscapes.

Where to dine : Eateries along the way serve delicious vegetarian and non-vegetarian fares. From khasi daal (local lentils) and ja stem (a Khasi preparation of rice cooked with turmeric, green peas and onions) to nakhambichi (a soup made with fish, which is first dried and then fried) and tungrymbai (a soul-filling dish cooked with fermented soya beans, sesame seed, onions, spices and meat), you will be spoilt for choice. Always be ready for surprises – the cuisines here are very distinct.

Additionally, many restaurants and eateries serve regular Indian highway menus, so fret not in case you start missing vegetarian food or Indian curries.

Travel Tips:

- There are numerous small waterfalls and scenic spots along the way. So, to make the most of this particular road trip, keep your eyes on either side of the road and stop at any place to admire the beauty.

- The weather changes frequently. Keep an umbrella handy along with warm clothing, necessary medicines and insect repellents.
- Days are shorter in the eastern part of the country – so remember – early to bed, early to rise.

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