VOL. 1 · NO. 6 · JUNE 2026

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.



The monsoon is a season, not a problem: Kerala

- MEGHALAYA IN THE RAINS: ROOT BRIDGES AND RULES OF THE ROAD
- THE WESTERN GHATS AND THE KONKAN, SLOWLY
- MIDSUMMER IN SWEDEN, AND THE DESERT RHINOS OF NAMIBIA
- THE RAINY-SEASON TRAVEL KIT

PUBLISHED BY TRAVAAH PRIVÉ ESCAPES · TRAVAAH.COM

EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Monsoon Journeys

From Gitanjali Gautam, Editor-in-Chief

For most of India, the monsoon is not a season for travellers to avoid, but one that arrives whether we are ready or not. It brings relief, and sometimes trouble. This month we have tried to write about it the way people who live with it do: with respect, with some planning, and with a little patience.

You will find a good deal of practical advice in these pages: what to carry, which places to avoid when the rain is at its heaviest, and why a flexible booking is worth more than a cheap one. We have also tried to say plainly where the rain makes travel risky. Landslides, floods and flooded roads are real, and an official alert is worth more than any travel blog.

Elsewhere we look beyond India, at a Swedish midsummer, the dry season in Namibia and the long days of an Alaskan summer. In June, a great deal of the world is bright and warm, and it is good to be reminded of it.

Write to us about the best rain you have ever travelled in.

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GITANJALI GAUTAM, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

- *Gitanjali Gautam*

Masthead

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PUBLISHER	Travaah Privé Escapes
ISSUE	Vol. 1 No. 6, June 2026
CONTACT	helpdesk@travaah.com · +91 70022 09781
WEB	travaah.com/magazine

In June the rains arrive across South Asia, and a certain kind of traveller begins to pay attention. This issue treats the monsoon as a season to plan around rather than a reason to stay home: Kerala's backwaters, Meghalaya's living root bridges, the Western Ghats, Bali in its dry season, and, for balance, the long light of a Swedish midsummer, the Namibian desert and Alaska.

DID YOU KNOW

Namibia has 86 communal conservancies covering more than a fifth of the country, according to a 2024 report.

DID YOU KNOW

The normal date for the south-west monsoon to reach Kerala is 1 June, but it shifts from year to year.

DID YOU KNOW

Living root bridges are grown from the aerial roots of the Indian rubber fig, Ficus elastica.

DID YOU KNOW

UNESCO listed Bali's subak system as a World Heritage landscape on 6 July 2012.

DID YOU KNOW

Midsummer Eve in Sweden falls on the Friday between 19 and 25 June.

DID YOU KNOW

The Western Ghats were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

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Proposed commission: “A walk in the rain”

The World Celebrates: festivals & events radar

How to read Wayfarer

RESEARCHED	Compiled from public sources; field verification pending.
PROPOSED	A commission, brief or concept - not a published story.
ILLUSTRATIVE	An example itinerary; check times and costs locally.
TEMPLATE	A format showing how offers appear; no real prices.

TRAVEL TIP

In the monsoon, treat every trail or waterfall closure as final.

TRAVEL TIP

Book flexibly in the rains; roads, ferries and houseboats can all be suspended.

TRAVEL TIP

Cotton stays wet for hours; choose quick-dry clothes and pack a waterproof pouch.

TRAVEL TIP

Buy alcohol in Sweden the day before Midsummer Eve; the state shops are closed.

Write to us about the best rain you have ever travelled in.

GITANJALI GAUTAM, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Most of us understand that the rhino pays us.

SEBULON HOEB, SAVE THE RHINO TRUST, AS QUOTED BY THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



COVER STORY

The monsoon is a season, not a problem: Kerala

The south-west monsoon reaches India through Kerala, usually in the first days of June. For travellers who plan for it, it is one of the most rewarding times to be there.

RESEARCHED · WEATHER ALERTS CHANGE DAILY

Photo: Kizhakolil (Kallara) · Public domain

THE SOUTH-WEST MONSOON ENTERS India through Kerala, and the India Meteorological Department treats the onset over the state as the official beginning of the season. The normal date is 1 June. This year the arrival has been slightly late: the department had forecast onset around 26 May, give or take four days, and a report on 26 May said it had passed that date, with onset now expected between 2 and 4 June. Dates shift from year to year, and a delay of a few days is not unusual.

What the monsoon means on the ground is a change of pace. The rain is often heavy but rarely constant, arriving in strong showers that clear to a washed, green landscape. Kerala has a second, lighter rainy season in October and November, but it is the June–September rain that gives the state its reputation. Hotels and houseboat operators often lower their rates, roads and ferries are quieter, and the backwaters take on a different look under low cloud.

A good first stop is the backwaters of Alappuzha and Kumarakom. Houseboats and smaller country boats operate through much of the monsoon, but the operator's weather judgement decides each day: in heavy rain, strong wind or an official warning, boats should not sail, and a good operator will say so. Book with a company that has a flexible policy, and keep a day spare.

For many visitors, the monsoon is also the season for Ayurveda. Many centres promote the rainy months as a time for rejuvenation treatments, partly because the cooler, damper air is thought to suit them. Kerala Tourism runs a classification scheme for Ayurveda centres, with categories known as Olive Leaf and Green Leaf, which is worth checking before booking. Treatments are medical in nature, so consult your own doctor first and be honest with the centre about any health conditions.

The hills need more caution. Munnar, Wayanad and Thekkady are beautiful in the rain, but heavy rainfall can cause landslides on steep slopes, and the state's hill districts have suffered serious ones in recent years, including the Wayanad landslides of July 2024. Check district alerts from the India Meteorological Department and the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority before travelling, avoid hill roads after prolonged rain, and follow local instructions, even when they seem over-cautious.

Packing is straightforward: a light, breathable rain jacket (umbrellas are useful in towns), quick-drying clothes, sandals that grip, a waterproof bag for phone and documents, and, if you walk in forests, leech socks. Travel insurance that covers weather disruption is worth the small extra cost.

A word on food, because the rains change the table. Kerala's kitchens lean on coconut, rice, tapioca and fish, and in the wet months you will find hot, simple dishes served with strong tea: banana fritters, steamed rice cakes, fish curry with kudampuli (a sour fruit used in place of tamarind). Fresh seafood is limited when boats stay in harbour, and a seasonal fishing ban applies along the west coast, so ask what is local before ordering.

A final planning idea is to travel in stages. Spend two or three nights on the water or in a village, then move to a hill or coastal base, so that bad weather in one place does not cancel the whole trip. Leave one day in the middle with nothing booked. The monsoon rewards the traveller who is willing to stay put when the sky closes and to walk out when it opens.

The best reason to come in the monsoon is the people you meet. Kerala's villages are used to guests in all weathers, and one of the best examples is in Kumarakom, where local women's groups supply the hotels and run village experiences. Their story is told in our People & Places pages. Come in the rain, travel slowly, and let the schedule bend.

At a glance

BEST TIME	The south-west monsoon runs roughly June to September; a lighter rainy season follows in October to November
GETTING THERE	Fly to Kochi (COK) or Thiruvananthapuram (TRV); trains run along the coast to Alappuzha and Kottayam.
PERMITS/VISA	No permit is needed for Kerala for Indian citizens. Foreign visitors should check India's current e-visa rules.
SAFETY	Follow IMD and state disaster management alerts; avoid hill roads and boat trips in heavy rain or red alerts.
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — alerts and operator policies change daily; re-confirm before travelling.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

HOW TO REACH

Alappuzha and Kumarakom backwaters, Kerala

AIRPORT	Cochin International Airport (COK), roughly 80–90 km from Alappuzha and about 65–70 km from Kumarakom.
RAILWAY	Alappuzha (ALLP) and Kottayam (KTYM) railway stations, both on the coastal line; Ernakulam Junction (ERS) in Kochi is the major junction.
BY ROAD	Kochi to Alappuzha is roughly 55–60 km (about 1.5–2 hours, slower in rain); Kochi to Kumarakom is about 2 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Houseboats and shikara boats, local ferries (Kerala State Water Transport), autos and taxis.

Distances approximate; rain slows roads and can suspend boats.
Distances approximate - verify.

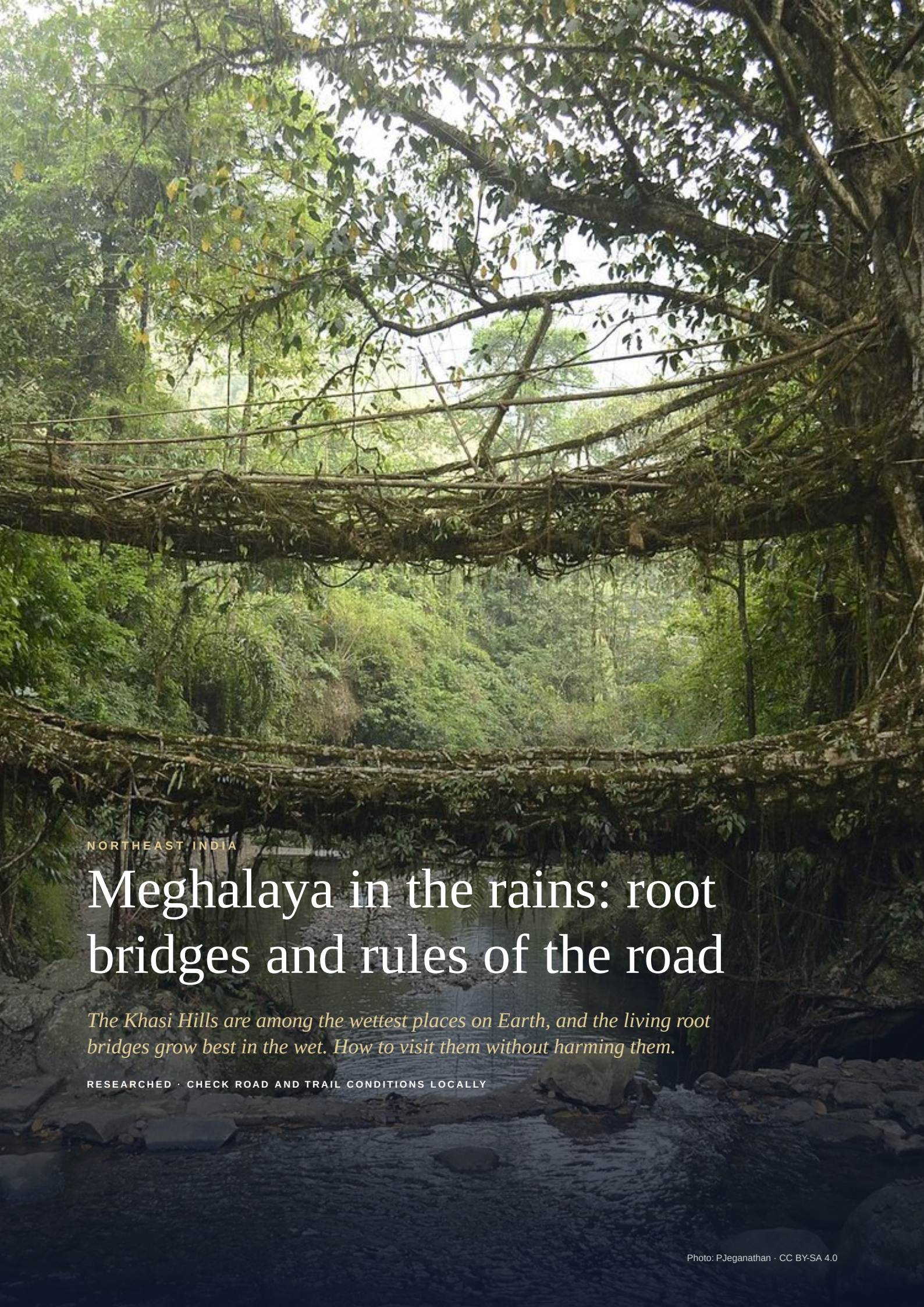
Official sources: Kerala Tourism (official) (www.keralatourism.org); India Meteorological Department (mausam.imd.gov.in); Business Today: monsoon onset expected 2–4 June (26 May 2026) (www.businesstoday.in); Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (sdma.kerala.gov.in)



Photo: Timothy A. Gonsalves · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: ANKAN · CC BY-SA 4.0



NORTHEAST INDIA

Meghalaya in the rains: root bridges and rules of the road

The Khasi Hills are among the wettest places on Earth, and the living root bridges grow best in the wet. How to visit them without harming them.

RESEARCHED · CHECK ROAD AND TRAIL CONDITIONS LOCALLY

Photo: PJeganathan · CC BY-SA 4.0

MEGHALAYA'S NAME MEANS THE abode of clouds, and the Khasi Hills around Cherrapunji, known locally as Sohra, and Mawsynram are famous for some of the highest rainfall anywhere. The rain shapes everything here: the waterfalls that thunder off the plateau, the green gorges and the unusual architecture of the living root bridges.

The bridges are grown, not built. Reporting by FactorDaily in October 2025 describes how they come from the aerial roots of the Indian rubber fig, Ficus elastica. Roots are guided across a gorge over a bamboo scaffold, usually in the monsoon when they are soft and flexible, and fed with forest compost; over years the strands fuse together. According to the same report, a bridge takes roughly ten years to bear a light load, about twenty-five to become stable for daily use, and fifty years or more to mature, and some last for centuries. More than a hundred living root bridges are said to exist in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

The best-known bridges, such as the double-decker bridge near Nongriat, are reached on steep stone stairways with thousands of steps. In the monsoon, those steps are slippery, rivers rise quickly and landslides can close the roads. Many local guides recommend visiting the most popular bridges outside the heaviest rains, and you should always follow local advice about whether a trail is safe. If the guide says no, the answer is no.

The other excellent monsoon sights are easier. The waterfalls near Sohra are at their fullest, the Mawlynnong village trail is a short, gentle walk, and the Umngot river at Dawki, where the water is famously clear, is calm enough for boating in the right weeks. Caves such as Mawsmai are open in many seasons, but check with the local authorities for water levels.

Because the bridges are living structures, the way you walk on them matters. Crowds are a growing problem. Morningstar Khongthaw, a Khasi conservationist profiled in this issue, began as a promoter of bridge tourism and came to see crowds as harmful, and he now works on growing and protecting new bridges. Visit with a local guide, stay on marked paths, follow any limit on the number of people on a bridge, and do not carve or pull at the roots.

A short note on language and manners helps. The Khasi, Jaintia and Garo communities of Meghalaya follow matrilineal traditions, in which family name and property pass through the mother, and the villages of the Khasi Hills are organised around clans and a village council. Visitors are guests of these communities. Greet people, ask permission before entering a village path or photographing a household, and pay the small fees that villages charge for trails and parking, since these often fund the upkeep of the paths themselves.

Stay in homestays in Sohra or Mawlynnong where you can, buy food and crafts locally, and check Meghalaya Tourism's current guidance on any rules for visitors. Roads between Shillong and Sohra are generally good, but landslides on hill roads are common in the monsoon, so leave time to spare.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Waterfalls peak in the monsoon (June to September); the root-bridge trails are safer and drier from roughly October to April
GETTING THERE	Fly to Guwahati (GAU) or Shillong (SHL); road to Shillong, then Sohra.
PERMITS	No permit is needed for Indian visitors for the main tourist circuit; check Meghalaya Tourism's current guidance for visitors.
SAFETY	Heavy rain makes steps, rivers and roads dangerous; follow local guide and district advice.
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — trail access, caves and road conditions change; confirm locally.

HOW TO REACH

Sohra (Cherrapunji), Nongriat, Mawlynnong and Dawki, Meghalaya

AIRPORT	Shillong Airport, Umroi (SHL), about 30–35 km from Shillong; Guwahati (GAU) is the main gateway, roughly 100 km from Shillong.
RAILWAY	Guwahati station (GHY); Meghalaya has no passenger rail connection to Shillong.
BY ROAD	Guwahati to Shillong takes about 3 hours; Shillong to Sohra about 1.5–2 hours; Shillong to Dawki about 3 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Shared Sumo taxis and private cabs; local guides are available at trailheads.

Distances approximate; monsoon landslides can close roads. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Meghalaya Tourism (official) (www.meghalayatourism.in); FactorDaily: The man who grows bridges from roots (29 October 2025) (factordaily.com)



INDIA

The Konkan and the Western Ghats, slowly, in the rains

A coast that closes its beaches for the monsoon, and a mountain range that does the opposite. How to enjoy both without fighting the weather.

RESEARCHED · VERIFY SEASONAL CLOSURES LOCALLY

Photo: Uttpal Krushna · CC BY-SA 4.0

INDIA'S WEST COAST CHANGES character in June. The Konkan, the narrow coastal strip of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, is hit first and hardest by the monsoon. Beaches in places such as Tarkarli and Malvan generally close to swimming and water sports, boat operators put up their anchors, and a seasonal ban on fishing applies on the west coast in the monsoon months, which usually runs from 1 June to 31 July. The coast is quieter and cheaper, but it is not a beach holiday.

The mountains behind it are a different story. The Western Ghats, which run along the whole west coast, were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012 for their biodiversity, and the monsoon is when they come alive: waterfalls appear on every ridge, forests turn deep green and mist hangs in the valleys. Maharashtra's Malshej Ghat and Amboli in Sindhudurg district are popular choices for waterfalls and cloud-watching, and the plateaus further east are known for their wildflowers later in the season, usually from late August.

The best way to see the region in the rains is slowly, and by train if possible. The Konkan Railway, which runs through the coast and the Ghats with many tunnels and bridges, is one of the more scenic rail journeys in India. It operates on a slower monsoon timetable during the rains, so check the current schedule and allow extra time.

Plan around the weather. Heavy rain can trigger landslides on ghat roads, and some viewpoints and trails are closed by forest and local authorities for safety. Treat closures as final. Travel in daylight, avoid waterfalls and river crossings when water is rising, and follow local advice rather than social-media trends. Many monsoon tragedies in the Western Ghats involve visitors who ignored warnings at popular waterfalls.

On the plate, expect the Konkan's coconut-based seafood curries, sol kadhi (a cooling kokum and coconut drink) and, in the rains, fresh bamboo shoots and seasonal vegetables. Fish is limited during the fishing ban, so ask what is local and what has been brought in. Vegetarian meals are widely available.

How to go well: stay in small, locally run homestays, which often welcome off-season guests warmly; buy from fishing and farming families; and leave the beaches to the sea, which is the point of the closure.

At a glance

BEST TIME	The monsoon (June to September) for waterfalls and forests; October to May for beaches and water sports
GETTING THERE	Fly to Goa Mopa (GOX), Dabolim (GOI) or Sindhudurg (Chipi); trains run on the Konkan Railway.
PERMITS	No permit is needed; some forest-department sites require entry fees and have monsoon closures.
SAFETY	Avoid waterfalls and ghat roads in heavy rain; follow local closures.
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — fishing-ban dates, closures and railway timetables change; confirm locally.

HOW TO REACH

Sindhudurg coast (Tarkarli, Malvan) and the Western Ghats, Maharashtra

AIRPORT	Sindhudurg Airport, Chipi (SDW), about 30 km from Malvan; Goa Mopa (GOX) and Dabolim (GOI) are the larger alternatives.
RAILWAY	Kudal and Sindhudurg stations on the Konkan Railway, about 30–40 km from Malvan.
BY ROAD	NH66 runs along the coast; Mumbai to Malvan is roughly 500 km (about 10 hours, longer in rain).
GETTING AROUND	Autos, shared jeeps and taxis; local guides for ghat viewpoints.

Distances approximate; ghat roads may close after heavy rain. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Maharashtra Tourism (official) (www.maharashtratourism.gov.in); UNESCO: Western Ghats (whc.unesco.org); Konkan Railway (konkanrailway.com)



Photo: ANKAN · CC BY-SA 4.0

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



ASIA

Bali in June: the dry season, and the quieter coasts

A calendar correction first: Bali's rains are in the cooler months, and June is the start of high season. Here is how to enjoy it without the crush.

RESEARCHED · VERIFY ENTRY RULES AND LEVY BEFORE TRAVEL

Photo: Stefan Fussan · CC BY-SA 3.0

A CORRECTION BEFORE WE begin. It is often written that Bali's green season is in the middle of the year, but Bali's wet season generally runs from about November to March, and June sits in the drier half of the year. That makes June a good time for beaches and outdoor activities, and the start of the busiest months, July and August. We have therefore written this guide for the island as it is in June: dry, bright and gaining crowds.

The first decision is where to stay. The south, around Kuta, Seminyak and Canggu, is the busiest. Ubud, in the centre, is popular for its arts, and the rice terraces north of it are a draw for day trips. Quieter alternatives include Sidemen in the east, Munduk and the lakes in the north, and the east and north-west coasts, where beaches are less crowded and the accommodation is smaller. Nusa Penida and other offshore islands are popular but need care with boats and weather.

Bali's rice terraces are a living agricultural landscape, and one of them is on the World Heritage List. UNESCO inscribed the Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: the Subak System in July 2012, with five components including the Jatiluwih terraces and the water temples at Lake Batur. The subak is Bali's traditional system of farmers' water cooperatives, linked to water temples, and is described in our People & Places pages. Visit with a respect for the fields: stay on the paths and do not enter the paddies for photographs.

Entry rules matter. Indonesia's immigration site lists the visa options, and Indian passport holders should check the current visa-on-arrival or e-visa arrangements before travelling. Since 14 February 2024, foreign visitors to Bali have also been asked to pay a levy of IDR 150,000 per person, which the provincial government encourages visitors to pay online through its Love Bali system before departure. The official FAQ says it is paid once during a trip.

Temples are active places of worship. Wear a sarong and sash where asked, avoid pointing your feet at shrines, never step on offerings (small trays of flowers and rice on the ground) and ask before photographing ceremonies. If you plan to attend a ceremony, go with a local guide or host, and follow their lead.

How to go well: use licensed drivers and local guides, eat at family-run warungs, avoid single-use plastic, and be mindful that water is shared with farmers and temples. The island's income depends on tourism, but its character depends on the people who live and farm here.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Dry season roughly April to October; June is dry but quieter than July and August
GETTING THERE	Fly to Ngurah Rai International Airport, Denpasar (DPS).
VISA AND LEVY	Check Indonesia's immigration site for the visa that fits your passport; foreign visitors are asked to pay a levy of IDR 150,000 per person through Love Bali.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Dress respectfully at temples; stay on paths in the rice terraces.
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — entry rules and levy amounts change; confirm on official sites.

HOW TO REACH

Ubud, Jatiluwih and central Bali, Indonesia

AIRPORT	Ngurah Rai International Airport (DPS), roughly 35 km from Ubud and about 55–60 km from Jatiluwih.
RAILWAY	Bali has no passenger railway.
BY ROAD	Airport to Ubud takes about 1–1.5 hours depending on traffic; Ubud to Jatiluwih is about 1.5 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Hire a car with a driver, use ride-hailing apps or arrange transfers through your hotel; motorbike hire needs the right licence and insurance.

Distances approximate; traffic on the south is heavy. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Love Bali (official levy site FAQ) (lovebali.baliprov.go.id); Indonesia Tourism (official) (www.indonesia.travel); Indonesia e-Visa (official) (evisa.imigrasi.go.id); UNESCO: Cultural Landscape of Bali Province (whc.unesco.org)



Photo: Viraj J Narkar · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Midsummer in Sweden: maypoles, herring and the longest light

Sweden's Midsummer Eve falls on 19 June this year. Here is what to expect, and why the best place to be is a village.

RESEARCHED · CHECK DATES AND OPENING HOURS

Photo: 01tonythomas · CC BY-SA 4.0

MIDSUMMER IS SWEDEN'S BIGGEST summer celebration, and it follows a clear rule: Midsummer Eve falls on the Friday between 19 and 25 June, which in 2026 means 19 June, with Midsummer Day on Saturday 20 June. Visit Sweden notes that in 2026 Midsummer Eve falls on 19 June. The date is not tied to the solstice, which is why it moves.

The tradition is simple and rural. Communities gather to raise and decorate a maypole with flowers and greenery, and to dance around it, often to songs that every child knows. Tables are laid with pickled herring, new potatoes, sour cream, chives and, afterwards, strawberries. Many Swedes leave the cities for the countryside, which makes the cities quiet and the villages busy.

The classic region for visitors is Dalarna, in central Sweden, where Leksand and Rättvik are known for their local celebrations, traditional costumes and lake settings. A village celebration is a better introduction than a city one: families are welcoming to visitors who join the dance, and the pace is gentle.

Practical points matter, because Midsummer is a national holiday. Shops, restaurants and public transport run reduced schedules, and Systembolaget, the state alcohol retailer, is closed on Midsummer Eve, so alcohol must be bought the day before. Book accommodation and trains well ahead if you want to be in a village.

Indian passport holders need a Schengen visa for Sweden, so apply early. The Swedish authorities' website sets out the process. Evenings in June are bright; in the far north the sun does not set at all in midsummer, but in Dalarna the nights are light rather than dark. Pack layers and rain gear, because summer weather can change.

How to go well: join in when invited, follow local etiquette, and treat the event as a family celebration rather than a performance. If you attend a village event, a small gift or a contribution to the shared meal is appreciated.



Photo: Snehrashmi · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

BEST TIME	Midsummer Eve: 19 June 2026 (Friday); Midsummer Day: 20 June (Saturday)
GETTING THERE	Fly to Stockholm Arlanda (ARN); trains run to Dalarna (Leksand and Rättvik) in about 2.5–3.5 hours.
VISA	Indian passport holders need a Schengen visa; check the Swedish migration authorities.
BOOK AHEAD	Accommodation in Dalarna fills early around Midsummer (provisional advice).
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — holiday opening hours differ by town; confirm locally.

HOW TO REACH

Leksand and Rättvik, Dalarna, Sweden

AIRPORT	Stockholm Arlanda (ARN), roughly 250 km from Leksand; Borlänge-Dala Airport (BLE) is closer but has few flights.
RAILWAY	Trains run from Stockholm to Leksand and Rättvik (usually via Borlänge or Mora line); the journey takes around 3 hours.
BY ROAD	Stockholm to Leksand is about 3 hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Local buses and taxis; hire a car for villages around Siljan lake.

Distances approximate; trains and buses run reduced services on holidays. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Sweden: Midsummer (visitsweden.com); Visit Sweden (official) (visitsweden.com)



Photo: Rohit Sharma · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Namibia in the dry season: wildlife, distance and the desert rhinos

The dry months are when animals gather at waterholes. They are also when the long road distances matter most.

RESEARCHED · VERIFY ENTRY RULES AND PARK SCHEDULES

Photo: Josep M. Gracia · CC BY-SA 4.0

NAMIBIA'S DRY SEASON, ROUGHLY from May to October, is the best time to see wildlife. With little rain, animals concentrate around the few permanent waterholes, and at parks such as Etosha the viewing from a car or lodge can be good. Days are warm to hot, nights are cold in the desert, and the skies are clear.

Distances are the first thing to plan for. Namibia is large and thinly populated, and roads between sights can be long, with gravel stretches. Many visitors hire a four-wheel-drive and drive themselves; others fly between regions or join tours. Plan generous drive times, avoid driving at dusk and night when animals cross the road, and carry spare water and a spare tyre.

Namibia has also built a model that connects wildlife to local livelihoods. Since independence in 1990, the country has established community conservancies, and according to the Christian Science Monitor in January 2024, 86 communal conservancies now cover more than 20 per cent of the country. In the north-west, the Save the Rhino Trust, founded in 1982, works with community rangers and trackers to protect desert-adapted black rhinos, and tourists can join guided rhino tracking on foot, in a way that pays for the work. We profile the trust's story in this issue.

Other highlights include Sossusvlei and the red dunes of the Namib, the Skeleton Coast and the Himba and Herero cultural areas. Treat cultural visits carefully: ask whether the community has been involved in planning the visit, and pay fairly for photographs and crafts.

Indian passport holders should check Namibia's current visa requirements through the official government channels before booking, as rules have been changing. Carry medical insurance with evacuation cover, since many areas are far from hospitals.

How to go well: choose lodges and guides who share income with conservancies, keep a respectful distance from animals, and stay on marked tracks in the desert, where tyre marks last for years.



Photo: Prof. Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly May to October for wildlife; nights are cold and days warm
GETTING THERE	Fly to Windhoek Hosea Kutako (WDH); self-drive, fly-in safaris and tours link the regions.
VISA	Check Namibia's current visa rules for your passport on official channels.
BOOK AHEAD	Etosha camps and rhino-tracking lodges fill early in the dry season (provisional advice).
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — entry rules, fees and park conditions change; confirm before booking.

HOW TO REACH

Etosha National Park, Damaraland and Palmwag, Namibia

AIRPORT	Hosea Kutako International Airport (WDH), about 45 km east of Windhoek.
RAILWAY	Namibia has limited passenger rail; most visitors drive or fly.
BY ROAD	Windhoek to Etosha's Anderson Gate is roughly 420 km (about 5–6 hours); Palmwag in Damaraland is a further long drive on a mix of tar and gravel.
GETTING AROUND	Self-drive 4x4, guided tours and short charter flights.

Distances approximate; road conditions and park rules change. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Namibia Tourism Board (official) (www.namibiatourism.com.na); Save the Rhino Trust Namibia (www.savetherhinonamibia.org); Christian Science Monitor: How a tiny town in Namibia saved its beloved rhinos (CSMonitor.com)



Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Alaska in June: Denali and the long days

Daylight stretches past bedtime, the park road has rules, and the bears are not to be approached. A planning note for a first trip.

RESEARCHED · CHECK NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FOR CURRENT RULES

Photo: Diego Delso · CC BY-SA 4.0

IN JUNE, ALASKA ENJOYS some of its longest days. Around the solstice, the sun is up for nearly twenty hours in Anchorage and for even longer farther north, which makes it easy to fit a great deal into a day, and a little harder to get a proper night's sleep. Blackout curtains and an eye mask are worth packing.

Denali National Park and Preserve, centred on North America's highest peak, Denali, which stands at about 20,310 feet, is the classic goal. The park is large, and the road into it is managed carefully. The National Park Service restricts private vehicles beyond a certain point, and most visitors take park buses deeper into the park, where wildlife viewing is part of the ride. Check the Park Service's website for current rules, bus bookings and any road closures, since landslides and maintenance have affected the road in recent years.

Wildlife is a draw, and a responsibility. Bears, moose and caribou are wild animals, and rules require visitors to keep a distance, store food securely and never approach animals for photographs. Carry bear spray where recommended, learn how to use it, and follow ranger advice. Mosquitoes can be intense in early summer, so carry repellent and light, long-sleeved clothing.

Getting around is part of the experience. The Alaska Railroad runs a scenic summer service between Anchorage and Denali, and roads connect Anchorage with the Kenai Peninsula, where Kenai Fjords National Park offers glacier and wildlife boat trips. Distances are large, and booking transport and accommodation early is wise in summer.

Indian passport holders need a US visa, and appointment waits can be long, so plan well ahead; check the US embassy and consulate pages for current timelines. Travel insurance that covers medical care in the United States is essential, because costs can be very high.

How to go well: use licensed local guides, support Alaska Native–owned tours and cultural centres, travel in small groups, and leave no trace on trails.



Photo: Udit Kapoor · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

BEST TIME	Mid-May to mid-September for most services; June has the longest days
GETTING THERE	Fly to Anchorage (ANC) or Fairbanks (FAI); train or road to Denali.
VISA	Indian passport holders need a US visa; check embassy timelines early.
BOOK AHEAD	Park buses, lodges and rail seats fill early (provisional advice).
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — park rules and road conditions change; confirm with the National Park Service.

HOW TO REACH

Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, USA

AIRPORT	Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (ANC), about 380 km from the park entrance; Fairbanks (FAI) is about 190 km away.
RAILWAY	The Alaska Railroad's Denali Star runs between Anchorage, Denali and Fairbanks in the summer season.
BY ROAD	The George Parks Highway links Anchorage and Fairbanks via the park entrance; Anchorage to Denali takes about 5–6 hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Park shuttle and tour buses on the Denali Park Road; private vehicles are restricted beyond the first section.

Distances approximate; services run mainly from mid-May to mid-September. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Travel Alaska (official) (www.travelalaska.com); National Park Service: Denali (www.nps.gov); Alaska Railroad (www.alaskarailroad.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The young Khasi conservationist who grows bridges

Morningstar Khongthaw began as a promoter of root-bridge tourism and ended up trying to protect the bridges from it.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Anselmrogers · CC BY-SA 4.0

Morningstar Khongthaw is a Khasi conservationist from Rangthylliang village, in the Pynursla area of Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills. FactorDaily's profile, published on 29 October 2025, records that his first encounter with a root bridge came at the age of six, when his father carried him across a single root. He began, the report says, as a would-be promoter of bridge tourism, but came to see the crowds as harmful and shifted to conservation.

The bridges he works with are grown from the aerial roots of Ficus elastica, guided across gorges over bamboo scaffolding during the monsoon, when the roots are soft, and fed with forest compost. Roots fuse together as they grow, scaffolds rot and must be replaced each year, and a bridge may take fifty years or more to mature. According to the report, he has so far mapped 133 bridges in Meghalaya.

His main project, called Project 2047, aims to have bridges standing when India turns 100 in 2047. So far, the profile says, he has planted 25 saplings, works with schools, and hopes to revive sacred groves known as Law Kyntang. In 2019 he rejected a top-down heritage plan, a UNESCO tentative-list approach, because he felt it excluded the people who raise the bridges, and instead brought together elders and landowners from eight clans. He also acquired a 400-year-old fig tree that had been slated for charcoal.

The work has had setbacks. The report records that bridges have been cut down during feuds, that his team shrank from about thirty people to five, and that five bridges were lost in the monsoon of early 2022.

For a visitor, his story is a practical guide. Go with a local guide, stay on marked paths, respect limits on how many people may be on a bridge, and understand that the most photographed bridges are the most stressed. Pay local fees, and buy from the villages that look after the bridges.

We have not spoken to Morningstar Khongthaw, and his work has also been described by UNDP and other outlets, whose accounts differ in some details, such as when his campaigns began. We have used only the FactorDaily report for the facts above.

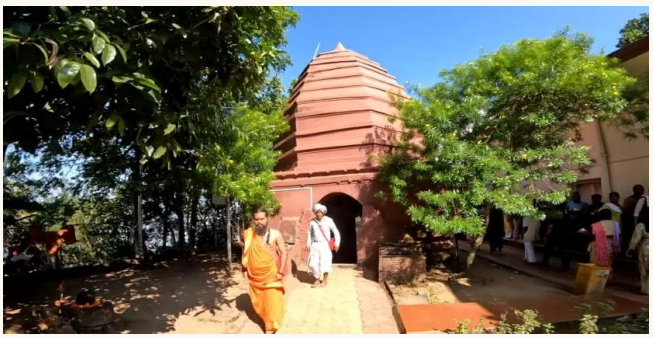


Photo: Extreminatethejuice · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	FactorDaily (Pankaj Mishra), 29 October 2025
PEOPLE NAMED	Morningstar Khongthaw
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. We have not spoken to the person named; other outlets differ on dates.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach through the Living Bridge Foundation or the village of Rangthylliang; obtain written consent for names, quotes and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Rangthylliang village, Pynursla, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya

AIRPORT	Shillong Airport, Umroi (SHL), roughly 35 km from Shillong; Guwahati (GAU) is the main gateway.
RAILWAY	Guwahati (GHY); Meghalaya has no passenger rail link to Shillong.
BY ROAD	Rangthylliang is about 50 km from Shillong, a drive of roughly 2 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Hire a taxi from Shillong; arrange visits through local guides.

Distances approximate; monsoon landslides can close roads. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (FactorDaily) (factordaily.com); UNDP: Conserving the living root bridges of Meghalaya (www.undp.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The trackers who keep Namibia's desert rhinos alive

In the north-west of Namibia, local trackers and rangers patrol a vast desert. The community says the rhinos pay them back.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Charles J. Sharp · CC BY-SA 4.0

In the town of Palmwag, in north-west Namibia, the headquarters of the Save the Rhino Trust sits in some of the most remote rhino country in Africa. The Christian Science Monitor visited the town in January 2024 and describes a conservation effort built on local people.

Trackers and community rangers patrol about 25,000 square kilometres, day and night, identifying individual rhinos by their behaviour, roaming patterns and features such as birthmarks, and logging every sighting. The trust was founded in 1982, when about 50 black rhinos roamed the area. Namibia is now home to almost 35 per cent of the world's remaining black rhinos, according to the report.

The trust's principal field officer, Sebulon Hoeb, explained the logic in a line the paper quotes: “Most of us understand that the rhino pays us.” Tourism provides the income. Rhino-tracking tours, lodges and guiding give communities a stake in the animals, and a half-day tour costs about 150 US dollars at the time of the report. The community had not lost a rhino to poachers in three years, even as poaching rose elsewhere in the country.

The report names others who are part of the story, including tracker Ebson Mbunguha, and the trust's chief executive Simson Uri-Khob, who has spent his career working to protect the species. It sets the work in the context of Namibia's community conservancies, introduced after independence in 1990, which now number 86 and cover more than a fifth of the country.

The picture is not simple. The same report says poaching rose 93 per cent nationally in the year before it was written, mostly in Etosha National Park. The lesson for visitors is to choose operators who share revenue with the community and the trust, and to follow trackers' instructions about distance and silence.

We have not spoken to anyone in this story, and figures reflect the January 2024 report.



Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	The Christian Science Monitor (Sara Miller Llana), updated 25 January 2024
PEOPLE NAMED	Sebulon Hoeb, Ebson Mbunguha, Simson Uri-Khob (Save the Rhino Trust)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. Poaching and rhino figures change each year.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact Save the Rhino Trust Namibia in Palmwag for consent, current facts and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Palmwag, Kunene region, north-west Namibia

AIRPORT	Hosea Kutako International Airport, Windhoek (WDH); charter flights can reach Damaraland airstrips.
RAILWAY	No practical passenger rail; travel is by road or air.
BY ROAD	Windhoek to Palmwag is roughly 600 km, a full day on a mix of tar and gravel.
GETTING AROUND	Self-drive 4x4 or a fly-in safari; rhino tracking is arranged through authorised lodges.

Distances approximate; check road conditions and book tracking in advance. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (Christian Science Monitor) (CSMonitor.com); Save the Rhino Trust Namibia (www.savetherhinonamibia.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The women of Kumarakom: how a village supplies its own hotels

In a Kerala backwater village, women's self-help groups grow vegetables for the hotels on their doorstep.

COMMUNITY PROFILE · FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Rison Thumboor · CC BY-SA 4.0

Kumarakom, a village on Vembanad Lake in Kerala, has long been a stop for houseboat travellers and luxury resorts. Kerala Tourism's own description of its responsible-tourism model is a modest one: the aim is to channel tourism income to local residents by having them supply goods and services to the hotels.

At the heart of it are the women of Kudumbashree, the state's network of women's self-help groups. According to the Kerala Tourism page, the women began by growing vegetables, then organised into groups called Samrudhi to handle procurement, supply and delivery. Their fresh, organically grown vegetables reach about fifteen hotels in Kumarakom, including luxury properties, and demand is strong.

The system has rules. The village government, the Grama Panchayat, set up a price-fixing committee and a quality committee, and a technical agency called GITPAC International manages the competitive bidding. Farmers and other self-help groups were encouraged to supply fish, chicken, eggs and other farm produce as well, and some moved into related tourism work. Kudumbashree units have also expanded into paper bags, processed foods, local snacks, rice powder and handicrafts that are sold to visitors.

The point, in plain terms, is that a hotel's guests eat food grown a short distance away, and the money stays in the village. Kerala Tourism also describes village-life experience tours, short visits that bring guests into local homes and workplaces, though we have not been able to verify the details of how those are run or paid for, and they are best arranged through a registered operator or the local tourism society.

If you visit, ask your hotel where its vegetables and fish come from, choose village experiences organised with the community, and be punctual and respectful in people's homes. Come in the monsoon, when this part of Kerala is greenest.



Photo: Rumelade · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited source and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Kerala Tourism (official page on responsible tourism in Kumarakom)
PEOPLE NAMED	None. This is a community profile of Kudumbashree women's groups in Kumarakom.
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases an official source. We have not spoken to the women involved, and numbers may have changed.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Kumarakom Grama Panchayat, the Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission and local Kudumbashree units for consent, current facts and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Kumarakom, Kottayam district, Kerala

AIRPORT	Cochin International Airport (COK), about 65–70 km away.
RAILWAY	Kottayam railway station (KTYM), about 15 km away.
BY ROAD	Kochi to Kumarakom takes about 2 hours by road; Kottayam to Kumarakom about 30 minutes.
GETTING AROUND	Boats, autos and taxis; many resorts arrange transfers.

Distances approximate; rain slows roads and can suspend boats. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Kerala Tourism: responsible tourism in Kumarakom (www.keralatourism.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The farmers who share Bali's water

A thousand-year-old system of farmers' cooperatives keeps Bali's terraces green, and it is under pressure.

COMMUNITY PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED SOURCES · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Cindi CGJ · CC BY-SA 4.0

Behind Bali's famous rice terraces lies a system of cooperation called the subak. It is Bali's traditional irrigation system, developed in the ninth century, which links terraced fields, canals, tunnels, weirs, forests and water temples across nearly 20,000 hectares, according to a summary of published research. A subak is a farmers' water cooperative, with its own name and leadership, and between 50 and 400 farmers may share one water source.

The system is not only technical. Farmers coordinate their planting so that fields lie fallow at the same time, which starves pests, and the schedule has to balance water sharing against pest control. Water-temple priests guide water management, and the philosophy behind it, Tri Hita Karana, describes a balance between people, nature and the divine. UNESCO listed the Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: the Subak System on 6 July 2012, with five components, including the Jatiluwih terraces, Lake Batur and the royal temple of Taman Ayun.

History offers a lesson. The same summary records that government programmes from 1967 pushed high-yield rice and pesticides, disrupting synchronised planting and leading to heavy losses to pests in the late 1970s. In 1988 the government changed course and the subaks regained control of planning.

The pressures today are real. Land conversion near Denpasar is reported to have reduced subak area sharply, from about 5,753 hectares in 1993 to about 2,444 hectares in 2018. Water diverted to tourism, falling groundwater and an ageing farmer population are other concerns.

For travellers, the practical lessons are modest. Walk on the paths, not in the paddies. Pay the entry fees where charged, because they help the farmers. Eat rice and vegetables from local farms where you can, and think about water: a hotel's pool and a villager's field draw from the same source.

This profile is a community portrait compiled from published summaries and UNESCO's listing, not from interviews; the subak figures come from different years.



Photo: Arunachal2007 · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited summary and UNESCO listing and must be re-checked against the originals before print.
REPORTED BY	A published summary of research on the subak system (Wikipedia, citing Lansing, Huang 2020, Norken 2019 and UNESCO); UNESCO World Heritage listing
PEOPLE NAMED	None. This is a community profile of Bali's subak farmers.
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published summaries. We have not spoken to subak members, and the figures are from different years.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach through the Bali provincial tourism office, the Subak Museum in Tabanan or the Jatiluwih management committee for consent, current facts and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Jatiluwih rice terraces, Tabanan regency, Bali

AIRPORT	Ngurah Rai International Airport (DPS), roughly 55–60 km from Jatiluwih.
RAILWAY	Bali has no passenger railway.
BY ROAD	About 1.5–2 hours by road from the airport or from Ubud.
GETTING AROUND	Hire a car with a driver; entry fees are charged at the site.

Distances approximate; traffic is heavy in the south. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Subak system (summary with sources) (en.wikipedia.org)); UNESCO: Cultural Landscape of Bali Province (whc.unesco.org)

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: Khasi kitchens

Rice, pork and fermented soybean: the flavours of Meghalaya's Khasi Hills.

RESEARCHED · VERIFY LOCALLY

Khasi cooking is simple, hearty and well suited to a cool, wet climate. The base is rice and meat, especially pork, with ginger, onions and local herbs, and fewer of the spices associated with other regional Indian cuisines.

Look for jadoh, a dish of rice cooked with pork and sometimes with blood and spices, which is often served at celebrations. Dohneiiong is pork cooked with black sesame seeds, a dish with a deep, nutty flavour, and tungrymbai is a fermented soybean preparation used in several dishes. In

towns such as Shillong, small local eateries serve these alongside rice, dal and vegetables.

Vegetarian options exist but need clear communication, because many dishes use pork or fish. Ask your host or restaurant, and seek out vegetable dishes, rice and lentils. The best way to understand Khasi food is at a homestay or a local market, where the cook can tell you what each dish is made from.

In the rains, markets offer seasonal greens, mushrooms and fruit, and the damp climate suits a hot cup of tea in a roadside shop. Accept food graciously, and ask before photographing a meal in someone's home.

At a glance

SAY IT	‘Khublei’ is a Khasi word used for thank you and as a greeting.
ETIQUETTE	Accept food graciously; ask before photographing a family meal.
VEG-FRIENDLY?	Possible with notice; confirm ingredients with your host.

HOW TO REACH

Shillong and the Khasi Hills, Meghalaya

AIRPORT	Shillong Airport, Umroi (SHL); Guwahati (GAU) is the main gateway, about 100 km away.
RAILWAY	Guwahati (GHY); there is no passenger railway to Shillong.
BY ROAD	Guwahati to Shillong takes about 3 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Local eateries, markets and homestays; taxis and shared cabs for day trips.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

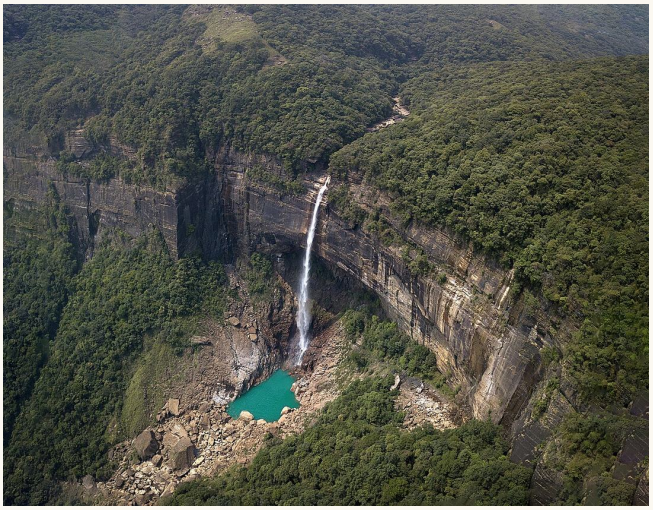


Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Heritage Without Borders: stepwells and the rain

In dry western India, the monsoon was stored underground. Rani ki Vav at Patan is the finest example.

RESEARCHED · CHECK OPENING HOURS LOCALLY

In western India, where rain falls in a few months and the rest of the year is dry, communities built stepwells: stepped structures that reach down to the groundwater and rise and fall with it. Their purpose was practical, to store and reach water, but many are also elaborately decorated, and some had a ritual role as well.

The most famous is Rani ki Vav, in Patan in Gujarat, which was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. It was built in the 11th century and is known for the carved panels that line its walls, many of them showing deities and figures. In the rainy months, the water table rises, and a visit gives a feeling of how the structure works with the seasons.

Practical advice: visit in the early morning or late afternoon to avoid the heat, and keep to the paths and steps. Do not climb on the carvings. The monsoon can make steps slippery, so wear shoes with grip. Other well-known stepwells, such as Adalaj near Ahmedabad and Chand Baori in Rajasthan, are also worth visiting, and each tells a different story of life in a dry land.

At a glance

ETIQUETTE	Keep to paths; do not touch or climb on carvings; steps can be slippery in rain.
CHECKED	Opening hours and entry fees must be confirmed locally.

HOW TO REACH

Rani ki Vav, Patan, Gujarat

AIRPORT	Ahmedabad (AMD), roughly 125 km from Patan.
RAILWAY	Patan railway station, about 2–3 km from the stepwell.
BY ROAD	Ahmedabad to Patan takes about 2.5–3 hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Autos and taxis in Patan; the site is a short ride from the station.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO: Rani-ki-Vav (whc.unesco.org); Archaeological Survey of India (asi.nic.in)

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Natural Calendar: June

What to look for, where, and how sure we are.

RESEARCHED · SEASONAL, NOT GUARANTEED

Waterfalls at their fullest (Western Ghats, Meghalaya, north-east India): the monsoon fills falls from June to September. *Reliable season; flows change day by day with the rain, and safety closures apply.*

Monsoon arrival (Kerala and the west coast): the rains reach Kerala in early June in most years. *Onset dates shift by days or a week; follow the India Meteorological Department.*

Midnight sun and long days (Arctic Europe and Alaska): the sun stays up for most or all of the day in the far north. *Predictable by latitude; cloud can hide it.*

Dry-season wildlife (Namibia, southern and eastern Africa): animals gather at waterholes as the dry season begins. *A pattern, not a promise; sightings vary daily.*

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Responsible travel: rain-season manners

Six habits that make a wet-season trip safer, and kinder to the place.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

Obey closures. Trails, waterfalls and beaches are closed in the monsoon for a reason. Local authorities and guides know the risks better than any website.

Do not crowd fragile places. Living structures such as root bridges and wet forests are easily damaged. Follow limits and stay on paths.

Book flexibly. Choose bookings that can change if roads or boats are suspended, and tell your host if you are delayed.

Use local guides. They read the weather and the terrain; paying them keeps income in the community.

Keep waste out of waterways. Rain carries litter into rivers and the sea. Carry it out.

Slow down. The monsoon is the season for long breakfasts and unplanned afternoons; plan for fewer sights and more time.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The Rainy-Season Travel Kit

A one-page list to save, print or share: what to carry, and what to check.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

1. **Weather alerts:** check the India Meteorological Department and state alerts before and during travel; treat red alerts as a reason to wait.
2. **Flexible bookings:** choose refundable or changeable tickets and stays.
3. **Insurance:** cover for weather disruption, medical care and cancellations.
4. **Rain jacket and quick-dry clothes:** cotton stays wet for hours.
5. **Footwear with grip:** and a spare pair of socks.
6. **Waterproof bags:** for phone, documents and chargers; a pouch with silica gel helps.
7. **Leech socks and repellent:** if you walk in forests.
8. **Power bank and offline maps:** signal fades in the hills.
9. **Medication and water purification:** carry medicines in original packaging and drink only safe water.
10. **Spare days:** leave slack in the itinerary for landslides and delays.
11. **Local advice:** ask your host about road, river and trail conditions each morning.
12. **Respect closures:** if a guide says no, the answer is no.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 24-Hour Destination: Shillong

One illustrative day in a hill capital. Rain, traffic and your own pace will change it.

ILLUSTRATIVE ITINERARY · VERIFY LOCALLY

Morning: a walk around Ward's Lake if the weather allows, or a coffee in Laitumkhrah.

Mid-morning: the Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, a museum of the cultures of the Northeast; check opening hours and entry rules in advance.

Lunch: a local eatery serving Khasi dishes such as jadoh; ask what each dish is.

Afternoon: a stroll through Police Bazaar, with a stop for tea; in dry weather, a viewpoint such as Shillong Peak.

Evening: live music or a cafe; Shillong has a lively local music scene.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

What to skip if short on time: distant waterfalls; they are better with a full day.

Hours, prices and rain closures are not stated here and must be checked locally.

HOW TO REACH

Shillong, Meghalaya

AIRPORT	Shillong Airport, Umroi (SHL); Guwahati (GAU) is about 100 km away.
RAILWAY	Guwahati (GHY); no passenger railway to Shillong.
BY ROAD	Guwahati to Shillong takes about 3 hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Walk the centre; taxis and shared cabs for attractions.

Timings approximate; rain can delay roads. Distances approximate - verify.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: khublei

A Khasi word for thank you and a greeting.

LEXICON

Khublei — pronounced roughly “khoo-blay” — is a word from the Khasi language of Meghalaya used to say thank you and as a friendly greeting. You will hear it in shops, markets and homestays in the Khasi Hills.

Use it with a smile. As with any word borrowed from another language, it is a courtesy rather than a shortcut, and is best followed by a real conversation.

COMMUNITY

Travel Quiz — June

Five questions. Answers appear in next month's issue.

QUIZ

1. Through which Indian state does the south-west monsoon usually first enter the country?

2. What tree's aerial roots are grown into Meghalaya's living root bridges?

3. What is the Balinese word for a farmers' irrigation cooperative?

4. On which date does Midsummer Eve fall in Sweden in 2026?

5. In which country does the Save the Rhino Trust protect desert black rhinos?

Answers (for the editor's copy — reveal next issue): Kerala · Indian rubber fig (Ficus elastica) · Subak · 19 June · Namibia.

COMMUNITY

Your turn: the best rain you travelled in

Reader engagement idea for the next issue.

READER INVITATION

Tell us about a trip made better by rain: 150 words and one photograph you took. Tell us where it was, what the rain did to the place, and one moment you would not swap. A selection will appear in the Readers' Pages with your name and photo credit, only with your permission.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Bookshelf: three books for a rainy day

Three books we would pack.

RECOMMENDED READING

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy — a novel set in Kerala, with the monsoon and the river running through it. Read it for the language.

Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power by Robert D. Kaplan — an account of the Indian Ocean world and its trade routes. Read it for the wider map.

The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh — a novel of the Sundarbans, the tidal forests of the Bengal delta. Read it for a place shaped by water.

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “A walk in the rain”

A brief for a real reader or contributor. Not a published story.

PROPOSED COMMISSION · NOT A REAL STORY

What we want: a first-person account (800–1,200 words) of a walk, trek or journey made in the monsoon, including what went wrong and what the rain made possible. The story should have one clear setting, one specific moment and one human encounter.

What we need from the contributor: a true story; photographs you own, with permission to publish; a short trip recap (route and dates, duration, how you checked

weather and trail conditions, budget range with currency and date, one thing you wish you had known).

Rights: the contributor retains copyright; we ask for permission to publish and archive with credit. We will show the edited text before publication.

To contribute, write to us via the contact page — and please do not send invented or composite stories.



Photo: ANKAN · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Madhumita Das · CC BY-SA 4.0

THE WORLD CELEBRATES

Festivals & events radar

Dates come from our festival guide and are approximate. Confirm with the official organiser before booking; lunar-calendar and annually announced events are provisional until confirmed.

NORTHEAST INDIA & INDIA

EVENT	WHERE
Hemis Festival	Hemis Monastery, near Leh, Ladakh
Dree Festival	Ziro Valley and Apatani villages, Arunachal Pradesh
Rath Yatra	Puri, Odisha
Nehru Trophy Boat Race	Punnamada Lake, Alappuzha, Kerala
Onam	Kerala

ASIA

EVENT	WHERE
Naadam Festival	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Bali Arts Festival	Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

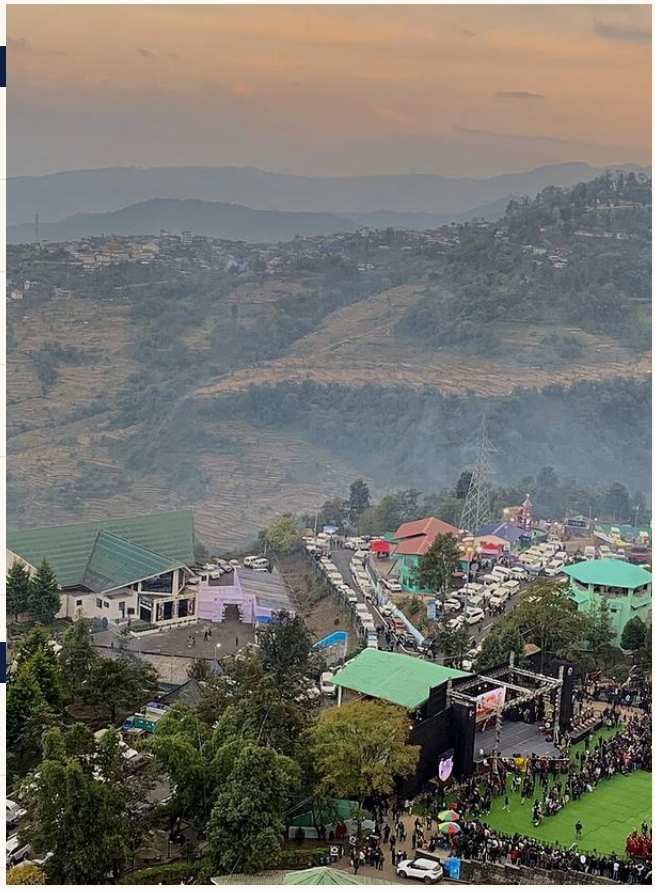


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EUROPE

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Midsummer Eve	Sweden (Dalarna is a classic setting)	19 June 2026 (Midsummer Eve), 20 June (Midsummer Day)	Maypoles, dancing and long light across Sweden..
Tour de France	Barcelona to Paris, Spain and France	4–26 July 2026	The cycling race starts in Barcelona and finishes on the Champs-Élysées..
Edinburgh Festival Fringe	Edinburgh, Scotland	7–31 August 2026 (most sources; check the official programme)	The world's largest arts festival, with thousands of shows across the city..

AFRICA & THE AMERICAS

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Q'eswachaka bridge renewal	Quehue district, Cusco region, Peru	Second week of June 2026 (exact days set by the communities)	Four Quechua communities rebuild the grass-rope bridge by hand over three days..
Inti Raymi	Sacsayhuaman, Cusco, Peru	24 June 2026	The Festival of the Sun, staged each year at the Inca fortress above Cusco..
Calgary Stampede	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	3–12 July 2026 (calculated from the festival's rule of ten days from the first Friday of July)	A rodeo, parade and exhibition with chuckwagon races and First Nations exhibits..

OCEANIA & INTERNATIONAL

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
FIFA World Cup 2026	United States, Canada and Mexico	11 June to 19 July 2026	The first men's World Cup hosted by three countries; expect heavy travel demand in host cities..
Vivid Sydney	Sydney, Australia	22 May to 13 June 2026 (23 nights)	Light installations, music and ideas across the city, with a large free programme..

THE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Format example

Real developments reported before this issue's date. Each item is labelled announced or implemented, with a source.

India: reports on 26 May 2026 said the south-west monsoon had passed its forecast onset date of 26 May and that onset over Kerala was now expected between 2 and 4 June (announced; Business Today). www.businesstoday.in

Ladakh: the Border Roads Organisation completed snow clearance and reopened the Manali–Leh highway on 12 May 2026, with traffic depending on weather (implemented; reported by The Tribune and Hindusthan Samachar). english.hindusthansamachar.in

Indonesia: foreign visitors to Bali are asked to pay a levy of IDR 150,000 per person, payable once through the Love Bali system, in place since 14 February 2024 (implemented; Love Bali official FAQ). lovebali.baliprov.go.id

Peru: Machu Picchu's high-season daily cap of 5,600 visitors applies from 19 June to 2 November 2026 (announced; Andina, 3 November 2025). andina.pe

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Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

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