VOL. 1 · NO. 1 · JANUARY 2026

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.



Rajasthan in winter: forts, books and a slower route

- MAGH BIHU AND THE TEA COUNTRY OF UPPER ASSAM
- KERALA'S KUTTANAD, BEYOND THE HOUSEBOAT
- TET IN VIETNAM: THE NEW YEAR THAT CLOSES THE CITIES
- PATAGONIA, MARRAKECH AND TASMANIA: THREE WAYS TO SPEND A JANUARY

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EDITOR'S DISPATCH

New Beginnings

A note from the editor

Every January we make promises to the calendar: fewer emails, more mornings, one trip that is not squeezed between two meetings. This issue is for the people who mean it.

Wayfarer is built on a few plain rules. We tell you where our facts come from. We say when a date is provisional. And when a story comes from published reporting rather than from our own conversations, we label it so, and name the people and the publication that did the work.

You will find that spirit in the People & Places pages this month: a biologist who recruited thousands of village women to protect a stork, village women who supply a hotel kitchen, a donor who turned private land into national parks, and a family that keeps a Vietnamese printing craft alive. They are all reported by others. We are grateful to them.

A new year is a good moment to choose a slower pace. Read on, mark a few dates, and write to tell us where yours begins.

A new year is a good moment to choose a slower pace.

EDITOR'S DISPATCH

- *Gitanjali Gautam*

January is the month of fresh pages: a bonfire of bamboo and straw on an Assamese riverbank, a lantern-lit flower market in Hanoi, a literary festival under the Rajasthan winter sun. This issue is about starting a year, and a journey, on the right foot.

TRAVEL TIP

Mornings in Rajasthan in January are cold. Carry a scarf and a warm layer for early starts.

DID YOU KNOW

Amer Fort is one of six forts that together form the World Heritage property Hill Forts of Rajasthan, inscribed in 2013.

DID YOU KNOW

The Charaideo Moidams, Assam's Ahom burial mounds, were inscribed by UNESCO in July 2024.

DID YOU KNOW

*Bhogali Bihu takes its name from *bhog*, meaning feasting.*

DID YOU KNOW

Rice is grown below sea level in parts of Kerala's Kuttanad, recognised by the FAO in 2013.

DID YOU KNOW

Tet 2026 begins on 17 February, the start of the Year of the Horse.

PLAN FOR WEATHER

In Patagonia, wind is the constant. Build spare days into any trek plan.

TRAVEL TIP

If you take a houseboat, ask how it handles waste before you book.

TRAVEL TIP

Around Tet, book transport and hotels early; many businesses close for three days.

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

IN THIS ISSUE

Contents

COVER STORY

Rajasthan in winter: a slower route through forts, cities and books

NORTHEAST INDIA · ASSAM

Magh Bihu and the tea country: January in Upper Assam

INDIA · KERALA

Kuttanad, beyond the houseboat

ASIA · VIETNAM

Tet in Vietnam: the new year that closes the cities

AROUND THE WORLD

Patagonia in summer: wind, granite and good planning

Marrakech in January: sun for the day, a coat for the evening

Tasmania in summer: coast, forest and a ferry to Bruny

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The women who protect the stork

The kitchen garden that feeds a resort town

From private land to public parks: a Patagonian gift

The family that kept a new-year print alive

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “My first journey on my own”

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: Assamese pitha and the Bihu table

Heritage Without Borders: the Moidams of Charaideo

The Natural Calendar: January

Responsible travel: being a good guest at a harvest festival

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Budget planning for a first big trip

The 24-Hour Destination: Jaipur

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: Fernweh

Travel Quiz: January

Your turn: where do you want to be on 1 January 2027?

The Traveller's Bookshelf

The World Celebrates: festivals & events radar

Treat the place as a gift held in trust.

FROM THE PATAGONIA PEOPLE PROFILE

Masthead

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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.

A new year is a good moment to choose a slower pace.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Go as a guest, and ask before you photograph.

FROM THE MAGH BIHU FEATURE



Photo: Chainwit. · CC BY-SA 4.0

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



COVER STORY

Rajasthan in winter: a slower route through forts, cities and books

Cold mornings, warm stone and a literary festival: why January suits Rajasthan, and how to avoid turning it into a sprint.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Jakub Haun · CC BY-SA 4.0

MOST VISITORS TREAT RAJASTHAN as a checklist: Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, in as few days as a car and driver allow. In January the state offers a better idea. Days are bright and mild, nights are properly cold, and the stone of the old cities is at its most agreeable in low light. The sensible plan is to choose fewer places and give each of them real time.

A good anchor is Jaipur. The old walled city was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2019, and the Jantar Mantar observatory, an eighteenth-century collection of astronomical instruments built in stone, has been listed since 2010. Amer Fort, above the city, is one of six forts that together form the serial World Heritage property Hill Forts of Rajasthan, inscribed in June 2013. The other five are Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Ranthambore, Gagron and Jaisalmer. You do not need to see all six. Seeing two properly, with a guide who knows the history and time to sit on a rampart, is worth more than a fast tour of every one.

January is also Jaipur's literary season. The 19th Jaipur Literature Festival is scheduled for 15 to 19 January 2026 at Hotel Clarks Amer, according to the festival's announcements and press coverage; confirm the venue and the entry and registration process on the organiser's site, because it has changed in the past. The festival is crowded and hotels in the city fill early, so if books are your reason to travel, book your stay first and your sessions second. If crowds are not your reason, plan Jaipur for the days before or after.

From Jaipur, one rewarding second stop is Ranthambore, whose fort and tiger reserve lie a few hours to the south-east. The fort sits inside the reserve, and the wildlife is the draw for most visitors; safari zones and seats are allotted through an official online system, and mornings in winter are cold enough that an open vehicle needs a real jacket and a scarf. Another is Chittorgarh and Kumbhalgarh, then Udaipur, for a route that moves from hill fort to lake city. Whichever you choose, allow for road times that are longer than the distance on the map suggests.

A few habits make the trip better. Eat where the cooks are local, and ask what is in season. Buy textiles and blue pottery from makers or cooperatives rather than from the first shop outside a monument. Dress in layers, because a 4 am start for a tiger safari and a 2 pm walk through a sunlit courtyard are two different climates. And leave a free day in the middle: the forts reward a second visit more than a third monument ever does.

Think, too, about who benefits. Rajasthan's craft traditions, from block printing to blue pottery and miniature painting, depend on buyers who value the work. A workshop visit where you see a printer at the table, hear how a block is carved and pay a fair price does more for a craft than any number of photographs, and it gives a trip a human shape that a monument alone cannot. Ask guides and hosts which cooperatives and family workshops they trust, and be wary of anyone who steers you only to shops that pay commission.

Practical note: foreign visitors usually pay higher monument entry fees than Indian citizens, and fees and timings change. Confirm on the Archaeological Survey of India or Rajasthan Tourism pages before you go.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly October to March; January mornings are cold, afternoons mild
FESTIVAL	Jaipur Literature Festival, 15–19 January 2026, Hotel Clarks Amer (confirm with the organiser)
HERITAGE	Jaipur walled city (UNESCO 2019); Jantar Mantar (2010); Hill Forts of Rajasthan (2013)
GETTING THERE	Jaipur has an airport and a main railway junction with direct links to Delhi and other cities
BOOK AHEAD	Festival week and tiger-safari seats; plan well in advance
CHECKED	10 November 2026: heritage listings against UNESCO; festival dates against published announcements. Re-confirm before quoting.



Photo: Sudipta Maulik · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOW TO REACH

Jaipur, Amer Fort and Ranthambore, Rajasthan

AIRPORT	Jaipur International Airport (JAI), roughly 12–15 km from the old city (approximate).
RAILWAY	Jaipur Junction (JP). For Ranthambore, Sawai Madhopur Junction (SWM) is the railhead, roughly 10–15 km from the reserve gate.
BY ROAD	Jaipur to Sawai Madhopur is roughly 160–180 km, about 3.5 to 4 hours by road; Amer Fort is about 11 km north of central Jaipur.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis, app cabs and auto-rickshaws in Jaipur; private driver or train for longer hops.

Distances approximate. Confirm monument timings and safari booking rules locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO: Hill Forts of Rajasthan (whc.unesco.org); Jaipur Literature Festival (organiser) (jaipurliteraturefestival.org); Rajasthan Tourism (official) (tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)



Photo: Anishshah19 · Public domain



Photo: JyotiPN · CC BY-SA 4.0

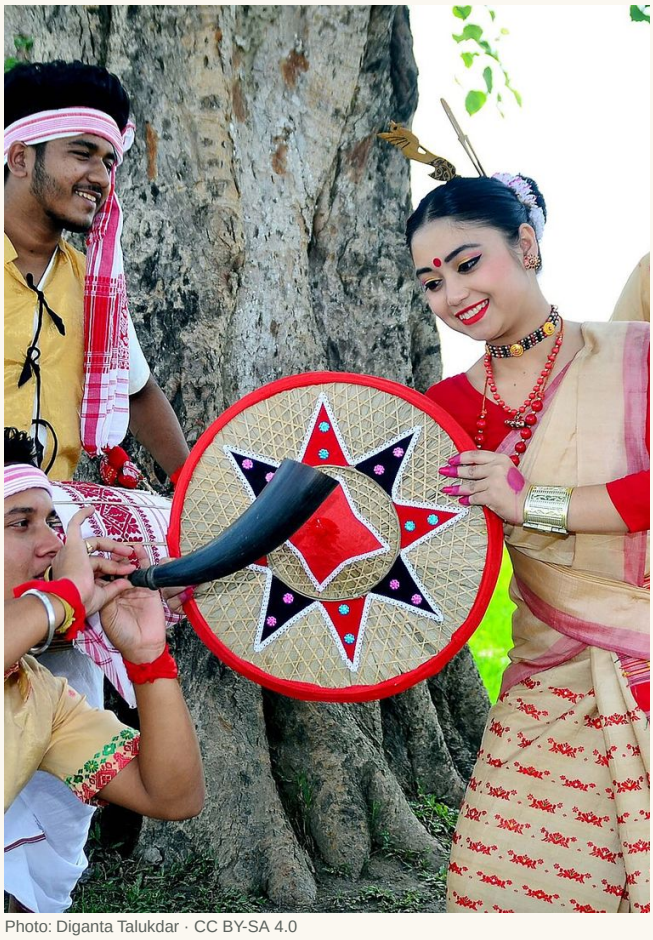


Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0



NORTHEAST INDIA · ASSAM

Magh Bihu and the tea country: January in Upper Assam

A harvest festival built around fire and food, in the region where Indian tea began.

RESEARCHED

Photo: GPhoto15 · CC BY 4.0

MAGH BIHU, ALSO CALLED Bhogali Bihu, is Assam's mid-January harvest festival. The name comes from bhog , which means feasting, and that is a fair summary. The evening before is called Uruka, when villagers and neighbourhoods build temporary huts of bamboo and straw, cook a communal meal and stay up around a fire. At dawn the next morning people bathe and light the meji , a stack of bamboo, wood and straw, as an offering; the ashes are traditionally scattered on the fields.

For 2026, most calendars and news reports place Uruka on 14 January and Magh Bihu itself on 15 January. Because the festival is tied to the sun's movement into Capricorn, a few sources give 14 January as the main day, so plan for both days. The festival is first of all a family and village occasion, and visitors are guests. Ask a hotel, homestay or tea estate whether any local group welcomes visitors to its Uruka feast, and go with that invitation rather than turning up uninvited.

The food is a large part of the day. Households make rice cakes called *pitha* in many forms, sweets of coconut and sesame called *laru* , and savoury dishes cooked for the night feast. If you are offered something, accept it and ask what it is called; Assamese hosts are usually delighted to explain.

Upper Assam is also the natural place to follow a festival with the tea country. The Tocklai Tea Research Institute in Jorhat, founded in 1911, is widely described as the world's oldest tea research station, and is run by the Tea Research Association. The Assam plains around Jorhat, Sivasagar and Dibrugarh are lined with estates, and some offer tours, tastings and stays in old planter bungalows. Visit between November and March for the cool, dry months, and check access rules with the institute and each estate before you go.

Two more places make a good loop. Majuli, the river island in the Brahmaputra, is reached by ferry from Jorhat district and is best in the dry season. The Charaideo Moidams, the burial mounds of the Ahom rulers, were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2024 and are covered in our Heritage column this month.

Plan the practicalities with care. January in Upper Assam brings cool mornings and thick fog, which can delay flights and slow roads, so leave a buffer day on either side of the festival if you have a connection to catch. Bihu falls at the same time as other mid-January festivals elsewhere in India, which means trains and flights to Guwahati and Jorhat can fill early. Book your transport first and your stay second, and keep your plans flexible enough to accept an invitation if one comes.

Check current travel advisories and local conditions before any journey in the Northeast, as roads and conditions change.

At a glance

BEST TIME	November to March; Magh Bihu falls in mid-January
DATES 2026	Uruka 14 January; Magh Bihu 15 January (some sources give 14 January for the main day)
GETTING THERE	Jorhat is the usual base for Upper Assam, with an airport and rail connection
PERMITS	No Inner Line Permit is needed for Assam. Foreign nationals should confirm any local registration requirements.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Go as a guest; ask before photographing people; buy tea from estates and cooperatives.
CHECKED	10 November 2026

HOW TO REACH

Jorhat and Upper Assam

AIRPORT	Jorhat Airport (JRH), a short drive from Jorhat town (roughly 10 km, approximate). Dibrugarh (DIB) is the alternative.
RAILWAY	Jorhat Town (JTTN) and Mariani Junction (MXN).
BY ROAD	Guwahati to Jorhat is roughly 300 km, about 6–7 hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and hired cars; shared vehicles between towns; ferries for Majuli.

Distances approximate; confirm locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Assam Tourism (official) (assamtourism.gov.in); Tocklai Tea Research Institute (www.tocklai.org)



Photo: Sarangakrishnachetia · CC BY-SA 4.0

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



INDIA · KERALA

Kuttanad, beyond the houseboat

Kerala's rice bowl lies close to sea level. Slow ways to see it, and why the houseboat is only one of them.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Kkkriku · CC BY-SA 4.0

KUTTANAD, THE LOW-LYING DELTA country around Alappuzha and Kottayam, is among the few places in the world where rice is grown below sea level. Kerala Tourism puts the lowest point at about 2.2 metres below sea level, though not all of Kuttanad is that low. In 2013 the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization recognised the Kuttanad below-sea-level farming system as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System. Fields are protected by earth bunds and managed with canals and pumps, and people live on strips of land between water and paddy.

Most visitors see it from a houseboat. That is a pleasant way to spend a night, but it also puts many boats on a fragile lake system. If you take one, choose an operator that treats waste properly and employs local crews, and ask how the boat disposes of sewage. If you want a quieter option, hire a small canoe with a local paddler to enter the narrow canals where larger boats cannot go, or rent a bicycle and ride the bund roads between paddy fields in the early morning.

Kumarakom, on Vembanad Lake, is a good base for a different kind of visit. The lake is a Ramsar-listed wetland, and the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary is a place to watch resident and migratory birds in the cool months. The village is also known in India for a responsible-tourism programme that began in 2007 and links local farmers and women's groups to hotels; our People & Places pages look at it.

Eat locally: karimeen, the pearl spot fish, is a regional speciality, and toddy-shop-style meals are part of Kuttanad life. Ask your host before you order, and if you do not eat fish, ask about the vegetable and coconut dishes.

January is a pleasant time to go: cool, dry and comfortable for outdoor time. The monsoon, from June to September, changes everything, and the region's flooding in recent years is a reminder that the landscape is under pressure.



Photo: Rohit Sharma · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly November to February for cooler, drier weather
GETTING THERE	Alappuzha and Kottayam both have railway stations; Kochi is the nearest major airport
PERMITS	None required for domestic or international visitors in Kerala, beyond normal entry rules
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Ask about waste handling on houseboats; prefer canoes, cycling and homestays.
CHECKED	10 November 2026

HOW TO REACH

Kuttanad: Alappuzha and Kumarakom, Kerala

AIRPORT	Cochin International Airport (COK), roughly 85 km from Alappuzha and about 90 km from Kumarakom (approximate).
RAILWAY	Alappuzha (ALLP) on the Kochi–Thiruvananthapuram coastal line; Kottayam (KTYM), about 15 km from Kumarakom.
BY ROAD	Kochi to Alappuzha is about 2 hours by road in normal traffic; Kottayam to Kumarakom about 30 minutes.
GETTING AROUND	Public ferries (State Water Transport Department), taxis, auto-rickshaws, canoes and hired bicycles.

Distances approximate; ferry timings change. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Kerala Tourism: Kuttanad (official) (www.keralatourism.org); FAO: Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (www.fao.org)



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



ASIA · VIETNAM

Tet in Vietnam: the new year that closes the cities

Vietnam's biggest holiday falls on 17 February 2026. What to expect, and how to plan around it.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Louis Anderson · CC BY 4.0

TET NGUYEN DAN, USUALLY shortened to Tet, is the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, and in 2026 the first day falls on 17 February, the start of the Year of the Horse. The government approved a nine-day holiday period from 14 to 22 February for state employees, and many private businesses follow it in part. For a traveller, that means a country that is very lively in the week before, and unusually quiet in the three days that follow.

In the lead-up, families clean their homes, pay off debts and buy flowers. In northern Vietnam, including Hanoi, peach blossom and small kumquat trees are the traditional decorations; further south, yellow apricot blossom is more common. Sticky-rice cakes called *banh chung* in the north and *banh tet* in the south are wrapped and cooked in the days before the holiday. Many visitors enjoy walking Hanoi's flower markets in the week before Tet, when streets fill with people carrying blossoming branches home on motorbikes.

The first three days of Tet are family days. Many restaurants, shops and small guesthouses close, and long-distance buses and trains are heavily booked as people return to their home provinces. This is not a bad time to visit if you plan for it: book accommodation and transport early, expect some closures, and use the quieter days for places that stay open, such as major museums and hotels, or a short trip with a hired driver. If you are invited into a home, bring a small gift such as fruit or sweets, and expect to be offered tea and snacks.

A traditional craft sold at Tet is Dong Ho folk painting, woodblock prints from a village near Hanoi that were once hung in homes for the new year. Our People & Places pages look at the family trying to keep the craft alive.

Entry rules: Vietnam's e-visa is open to citizens of all countries, valid for up to 90 days, and costs USD 25 for a single entry and USD 50 for multiple entries, according to the official portal and tourism authority. Apply only through the government site, as many look-alike agencies charge much more. Check your own passport's requirements before travelling.

At a glance

WHEN	Tet is 17 February 2026; official holiday period 14–22 February
ENTRY	E-visa open to all nationalities since 15 August 2023; 90 days; USD 25 single, USD 50 multiple (confirm current rules on the official portal)
BOOK AHEAD	Transport and hotels around Tet fill early; many businesses close for three days
CHECKED	10 November 2026: holiday dates and e-visa details against official government pages

HOW TO REACH

Hanoi, Vietnam

AIRPORT	Noi Bai International Airport (HAN), roughly 30 km north of central Hanoi (approximate).
RAILWAY	Hanoi Railway Station, with the North–South line running to Hue, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City.
BY ROAD	About 45 minutes to an hour by road from the airport to the Old Quarter, longer in heavy traffic.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and ride-hailing apps; walking in the Old Quarter; buses and trains for longer routes.

Approximate. Expect heavier traffic in the week before Tet. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Vietnam e-visa (official portal) (evisa.gov.vn); Vietnam Tourism (official) (vietnam.travel); Government announcement of the nine-day Tet holiday (14 October 2025) (en.baochinhphu.vn)

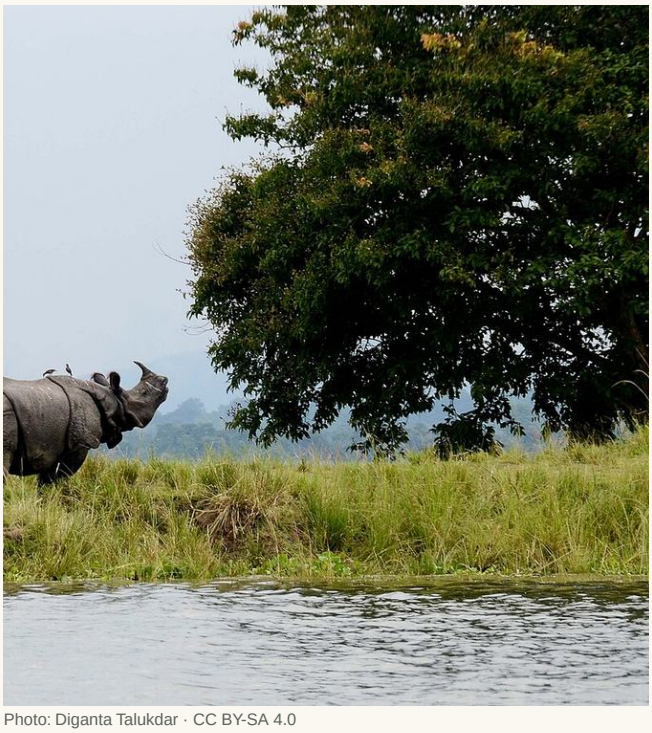


Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Patagonia in summer: wind, granite and good planning

January is peak season in southern Chile. Book early, pack for four seasons, and give the weather room.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Pedro Szekely from Los Angeles, USA · CC BY-SA 2.0

IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE January is high summer, and Torres del Paine National Park, in the Magallanes region of Chilean Patagonia, is at its busiest. The days are long, the trails are open and the park's granite towers and glacial lakes are at their most accessible. The same conditions bring crowds, high prices and some of the world's most changeable weather. Wind is the constant; rain, sun and cold can arrive within the same hour.

The park is best known for two multi-day routes, the W trek and the longer O circuit. Both depend on accommodation inside the park, in campsites and refugios, and in peak months these are booked many months ahead. If you do not want to commit to a multi-day trek, there are day walks, boat trips on the lakes and guided options from Puerto Natales, the gateway town. Entry rules, fees and trail regulations in Chilean national parks change from season to season, so check the national forestry service, CONAF, and the park's official channels before booking.

Pack as if for four seasons: waterproof shell, windproof layers, a warm hat even in summer, sun protection and broken-in boots. Treat the weather as a variable, not an enemy; build one or two spare days into any schedule. And plan around the environment: stay on marked paths, carry out your waste, and follow the park's rules on fires, which have caused serious damage in this region in the past.

A second Patagonia is worth a thought. The north of Chilean Patagonia, along the Carretera Austral, has forests, fjords and the national parks created from private donations, covered in our People & Places pages this month.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly November to March for hiking; January is the busiest month
REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS	Strong wind and rapid weather changes are normal
BOOK AHEAD	Park campsites and refugios sell out many months in advance
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check the official Chilean government and CONAF sites
CHECKED	10 November 2026: re-confirm park rules before booking

HOW TO REACH

Torres del Paine National Park, Magallanes, Chile

AIRPORT	Punta Arenas Airport (PUQ), roughly 250 km from Puerto Natales; Puerto Natales has a small airport with limited services (approximate).
RAILWAY	No passenger railway serves the area.
BY ROAD	Puerto Natales to the park entrance is roughly 110 km (about 2 hours); Punta Arenas to Puerto Natales is about 3 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Buses and shuttles from Puerto Natales; hired car; guided tours.

Distances approximate. Confirm entry and shuttle arrangements with the park. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: CONAF (Chile's national forestry service) (www.conaf.cl); Chile Travel (official tourism) (chile.travel)



Photo: Udit Kapoor · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Extreminatethejuice · CC BY-SA 4.0

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



AROUND THE WORLD

Marrakech in January: sun for the day, a coat for the evening

A cool-season city for gardens, courtyards and slow lunches, with a few things to plan for.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Herokk · CC BY-SA 4.0

JANUARY IS A COMFORTABLE month in Marrakech. Daytime temperatures are mild and pleasant for walking, while mornings and evenings are cold enough to need a proper layer, particularly in unheated riads. Rain is not common but can happen, so carry a light waterproof, and have an indoor plan.

The medina, the old walled city, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the best way to see it is slowly, with one sight in the morning and one in the afternoon. The Jemaa el-Fnaa square is its centre and changes through the day: orange-juice stalls and storytellers by day, food stalls and musicians at night. Nearby, the Bahia Palace and the Saadian Tombs are within walking distance of each other and are best visited early, before tour groups arrive.

Outside the old city, the Majorelle Garden, created by the painter Jacques Majorelle and later restored by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, is one of the most visited places in Marrakech. Buy tickets online where possible and arrive at opening time. Prices and opening hours change, so confirm them with the site.

For a change of pace, the Atlas Mountains are an easy day trip, and in winter parts of the High Atlas can be snow-capped on a clear day. Choose a licensed guide and an operator that pays local people fairly.

Practical points: use official taxis or agree prices before you start, learn a few words of Arabic or French, and ask before photographing people. Visa rules depend on your passport, so check the official Moroccan authorities before you book.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Winter is cool and sunny; spring and autumn are also popular
GETTING THERE	Marrakech Menara Airport is a short drive from the medina
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on your passport; check official Moroccan government information
BOOK AHEAD	Popular riads fill during school holidays and festival weeks
CHECKED	10 November 2026; entry fees and opening hours not confirmed and must be checked with each site

HOW TO REACH

Marrakech, Morocco

AIRPORT	Marrakech Menara Airport (RAK), roughly 6 km from the medina (approximate).
RAILWAY	Marrakech railway station (ONCF), with trains to Casablanca and other cities; a few hours to Casablanca.
BY ROAD	Highways link Marrakech to Casablanca and Agadir; roads into the Atlas are winding.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis (agree the fare or ask for the meter), walking in the medina, buses and tours for day trips.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Morocco (official tourism) (www.visitmorocco.com); UNESCO: Medina of Marrakesh (whc.unesco.org)



Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Rumelade · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Tasmania in summer: coast, forest and a ferry to Bruny

A southern-hemisphere island with long evenings, short drives and a parks pass worth buying.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Diego Delso · CC BY-SA 3.0

JANUARY IS SUMMER IN Tasmania, Australia's southern island state, and daylight lasts well into the evening. The island is compact enough that you can base yourself in a few places and still see a great deal: Hobart for food, museums and the waterfront; the east coast for beaches and national parks; and the south for forest and cliffs.

Most Tasmanian national parks require a parks pass, which can be bought online through the Parks and Wildlife Service or at visitor centres. Cradle Mountain, in the north-west, has its own pass and shuttle system, so read the rules before you plan a visit. Prices change from year to year, so check the official site rather than relying on a guidebook.

Two day trips from Hobart show the range. Bruny Island is reached by a car ferry from Kettering, about half an hour south of the city, and is known for its coastline, produce and wildlife. Freycinet National Park, on the east coast, includes Wineglass Bay and is within a few hours' drive of Hobart. In summer, tracks and viewpoints are busy, so go early.

Plan with weather in mind. Tasmanian summers can be warm one day and cool and wet the next, and bushfire risk is real in dry spells. Check conditions with the local fire service and parks authority, carry water, and follow any closures.

As in all places with sensitive ecosystems: stay on tracks, take rubbish with you, give wildlife space and do not feed it.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly December to March for warm weather; shoulder seasons are quieter
GETTING THERE	Hobart and Launceston have airports with flights from the Australian mainland
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on your passport; check the Australian Department of Home Affairs
PARKS PASS	Required for most national parks; check the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service for current prices
CHECKED	10 November 2026: re-confirm ferry timings, pass rules and fire advice before travelling

HOW TO REACH

Hobart, Bruny Island and Freycinet, Tasmania, Australia

AIRPORT	Hobart Airport (HBA), roughly 17 km east of the city centre; Launceston (LST) serves the north (approximate).
RAILWAY	There is no passenger railway in Tasmania.
BY ROAD	Hobart to Kettering (Bruny Island ferry) is about 30–40 minutes; Hobart to Freycinet is roughly 2.5 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Hire car is the most practical choice; some tours and shuttles operate to major sights.

Distances approximate; ferry timetables change with season. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Discover Tasmania (official tourism) (www.discovertasmania.com.au); Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (parks.tas.gov.au)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The women who protect the stork

In Assam's Brahmaputra Valley, a biologist helped turn a bird villagers once disliked into a symbol of local pride.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Dr. Raju Kasambe · CC BY-SA 4.0

The greater adjutant stork, known in Assamese as the *hargila* , is a large, bald-headed scavenger that nests in tall trees close to villages. For years many rural residents saw it as a pest, and the loss of nesting trees pushed the species to the edge. Biologist Purnima Devi Barman began studying it for her doctorate in 2007, and what followed became one of Assam's best-known community conservation efforts.

Mongabay's Angana Chakrabarti, writing in May 2025, reports that Barman, who works with the wildlife organisation Aaranyak and leads the Women in Nature Network, founded the Hargila Army, a network of village women now said to number more than 20,000 members. Other outlets quote smaller figures for earlier years, so the exact count is best checked with the group.

The method, as Mongabay describes it, was to work through culture. Barman began with a rice-cake (*pitha*)

competition to draw village women together, and prayer songs about the stork are now sung in the *naamghar* , the village prayer hall. The bird's image appears in weaving and on *mekhela sador* garments, and a ceremony akin to a baby shower is held to wish nesting mothers and nestlings well. Villages named in the report include Dadara, Singimari and Pacharia in Kamrup district.

The results are measurable. The report cites the IUCN's estimate of 650 to 800 mature birds in 2007 and 1,360 to 1,510 by 2023, a rise that helped move the species from Endangered to Near Threatened. TIME named Barman among its Women of the Year for 2025.

For a visitor, the lesson is both practical and humbling. A bird that people avoided is now a source of pride and, in some villages, a modest tourism draw. If you visit, go through a local guide or the conservation group, do not approach nests, and buy woven goods that carry the stork motif directly from the women who make them.

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	Mongabay (Angana Chakrabarti), 15 May 2025
PEOPLE NAMED	Purnima Devi Barman; villages Dadara, Singimari and Pacharia (Kamrup district, Assam)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. We have not spoken to the people named, and membership figures differ between outlets.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach Aaranyak or the Hargila Army through official channels for consent, interviews and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Kamrup district, near Guwahati, Assam

AIRPORT	Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati (GAU), the usual gateway.
RAILWAY	Guwahati (GHY) and Kamakhya (KYQ) stations.
BY ROAD	The villages named lie within a day trip of Guwahati by road; ask Aaranyak or a local guide for directions and timings (approximate).
GETTING AROUND	Hire a car with a local guide; do not visit nesting sites without guidance.

Access rules for nesting areas change; confirm locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (Mongabay) (news.mongabay.com); Aaranyak (conservation organisation) (aaranyak.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The kitchen garden that feeds a resort town

In Kumarakom, Kerala, a local programme asked hotels to buy vegetables from the village next door.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Rainer Halama · CC BY-SA 4.0

Kumarakom, on Vembanad Lake, has long been a destination for travellers who want backwaters, birds and a slow pace. It is also a case study in how a tourist town can try to keep money in the village. Kerala's Responsible Tourism initiative began in Kumarakom in 2007, and the Kerala Tourism department describes it as a partnership of the local panchayat, tourism businesses, non-governmental groups and residents.

One of its best-known parts concerns food. According to Kerala Tourism's material and reporting by Business Today in September 2008, women's self-help groups under the state's Kudumbashree programme grew and gathered vegetables, and a procurement group called Samrudhi collected produce from local farmers and supplied it to resorts. Agreements between local groups and hotels were signed on 14 March 2008, the day the programme was formally launched; accounts differ on whether 15 or 19 hotels took part.

The hotels were initially cautious about quality and supply, and the panchayat urged them to try. A hotel association leader quoted in the reporting later said the early mistrust had faded. Kerala Tourism itself is candid about the limits: the supply group has relied on rented vehicles and has also had to buy vegetables from outside the area to meet demand.

Kerala Tourism received the UN World Tourism Organization's Ulysses Award for innovation in public policy and governance for the responsible-tourism project in Kumarakom. Programmes of this kind are sometimes held

up as models, but the useful lesson is more modest: ask where your food comes from, choose accommodation that buys locally, and tip the people who actually prepare and serve your meals.

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	Kerala Tourism (Responsible Tourism pages); Business Today, 18 September 2008
PEOPLE NAMED	No individuals are named; the profile concerns women's self-help groups (Kudumbashree and Samrudhi) and farmers
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published and official material; numbers of hotels and participants vary between sources.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact the Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission and the Kumarakom panchayat for consent, names and current figures.

HOW TO REACH

Kumarakom, Kottayam district, Kerala

AIRPORT	Cochin International Airport (COK), roughly 90 km away (approximate).
RAILWAY	Kottayam station (KTYM), roughly 15 km away.
BY ROAD	About 30 minutes by road from Kottayam; about 2.5 hours from Kochi airport.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis, auto-rickshaws and boats; many resorts arrange transfers.

Approximate; confirm transfers with your accommodation. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Kerala Tourism: Responsible Tourism in Kumarakom (official) (keralatourism.org); Business Today (18 September 2008) (www.businesstoday.in)



Photo: Arunachal2007 · CC BY-SA 4.0

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

From private land to public parks: a Patagonian gift

Kristine Tompkins and her late husband bought land in Chile and Argentina, then gave it back as national parks.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER

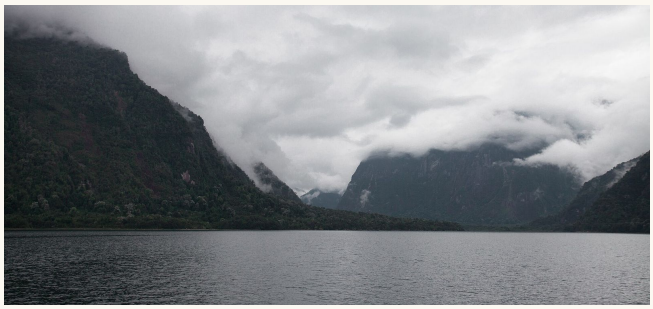


Photo: Almonroth · CC BY-SA 3.0

Over about three decades, the American conservationist Douglas Tompkins and his wife Kristine Tompkins, formerly the chief executive of the outdoor-clothing company Patagonia, bought and protected large tracts of land in southern Chile and Argentina. Their goal was not to own wilderness but to hand it over: they wanted to see it become national parks open to the public.

The handover is described in the World Economic Forum's February 2018 summary and in National Geographic coverage of the same month. In March 2017, Kristine Tompkins pledged to donate more than a million acres to the Chilean state. On 29 January 2018, President Michelle Bachelet signed decrees creating Pumalin Park Douglas R. Tompkins National Park and Patagonia National Park, among five new parks, and expanding three existing ones. Reports describe the arrangement as the largest private land donation to a country. Figures differ between sources, so the acreage should be checked against official Chilean government statements before it is quoted.

The parks form part of what Chile calls the Route of Parks, a long chain of protected areas along the southern spine of the country; sources quote its length at about 1,500 to 1,700 miles. Tompkins Conservation has also run rewilding work, including reintroducing species such as huemul deer, and has reported rising puma numbers in the Patagonia Park area.

For travellers, the story is also an invitation: much of this land is open to visitors, with hiking, camping and lodging options. Treat it as a gift held in trust, follow park rules, and book through the official channels.

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	World Economic Forum, February 2018; National Geographic, January 2018
PEOPLE NAMED	Kristine Tompkins; Douglas Tompkins; President Michelle Bachelet
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting; acreage and route length vary by source.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact Tompkins Conservation and Chile's park authorities (CONAF) for consent, current facts and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Pumalin Park Douglas R. Tompkins National Park, Los Lagos and Aysen regions, Chile

AIRPORT	El Tepual Airport, Puerto Montt (PMC), the usual gateway; Balmaceda (BBA) serves the Aysen side.
RAILWAY	No passenger railway serves the area.
BY ROAD	The Carretera Austral runs through the area; sections use ferries, so plan with current timetables. Puerto Montt to the northern park gateway takes several hours including a ferry (approximate).
GETTING AROUND	Hired car, buses and park shuttles; ferries on the Carretera Austral.

Ferry schedules and road conditions change; confirm locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: World Economic Forum, 2018 (www.weforum.org); National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The family that kept a new-year print alive

Near Hanoi, a village once famous for the prints hung at Tet is down to a few families. One of them is working to hold on.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Daderot · CC0

Dong Ho is a village in the Bac Ninh area, north of Hanoi, that gave its name to a style of folk woodblock painting. For generations, northern Vietnamese families bought the prints before Tet and hung them in the home as decoration and as good-luck wishes. Scenes of rural life, animals and proverbs are typical subjects. Each print is made from a series of carved blocks, one for the outline and others for each colour, pressed by hand on to paper.

Reporting from Vietnamese outlets describes how the craft shrank from a trade shared by many clans in the village to just a few families. The Hanoi Times, in September 2014, profiled artisans Nguyen Dang Che and Nguyen Huu Sam as among the few remaining practitioners, and reported that Che's family had invested more than three billion dong in a centre to preserve and show the craft. Coverage by Vietnam News Agency and other outlets also describes Che persuading relatives in the mid-1990s to return from other work to printing, and a younger family member coming home from Hanoi to carry on.

The reporting emphasises tradition. Pigments are described as natural, drawn from plants, shell and charcoal, and the family aims to follow the older processes rather than industrial shortcuts. That commitment is also what makes the craft hard to sustain, because it is slow and the market is small.

If you visit near Tet or at another time of year, buy directly from the workshop, ask how a print was made, and treat the price as reflecting hand labour. A few prints, framed at home, are a better souvenir than a drawer of mass-produced copies.

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	Hanoi Times, 7 September 2014; Vietnam News Agency and VietnamPlus (later features, dates to be confirmed)
PEOPLE NAMED	Nguyen Dang Che; Nguyen Huu Sam (as reported by the Hanoi Times)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting, some of it more than a decade old; the current state of the craft must be confirmed.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Bac Ninh culture authorities or the family workshop for consent, current facts and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Dong Ho village, Bac Ninh area, Vietnam

AIRPORT	Noi Bai International Airport (HAN), roughly 45 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	Bac Ninh and Yen Vien stations on lines north of Hanoi.
BY ROAD	Roughly 35–40 km from central Hanoi, about an hour by road.
GETTING AROUND	Taxi, ride-hailing or a tour from Hanoi; ask the workshop about opening hours.

Approximate. Administrative boundaries in Vietnam have changed recently; confirm the exact address locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Hanoi Times (2014) (hanoitimes.vn); Vietnam Tourism: Dong Ho folk paintings (vietnamtourism.vn)

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “My first journey on my own”

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 first solo trip, at any age: where you went, one decision you were nervous about, and one thing you would tell someone setting out next year.

What we need: a true story; photographs you own, with permission to publish; and a short trip recap (destination and dates, duration, route, budget range with currency and date, transport and accommodation, one thing you wish you had known).

Rights: you keep the copyright; we ask permission to publish and archive with credit, and we will show you the edited text before publication. Please do not send invented or composite stories. Write to us via the contact page.

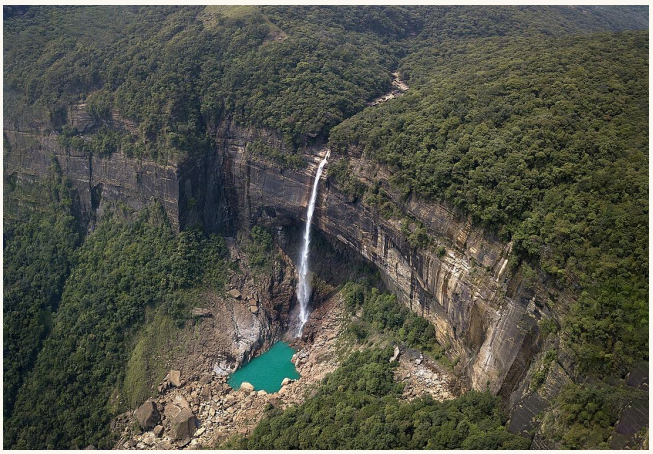


Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: Assamese pitha and the Bihu table

Rice cakes, sesame sweets and a communal feast: the flavours of January in Assam.

RESEARCHED

In Assam the harvest is celebrated with rice. *Pitha* , rice cakes cooked in many ways, are central to Magh Bihu: some are steamed, some roasted on a hot surface, some filled with sesame and jaggery or with coconut. *Laru* , small coconut and sesame sweets, are made in large batches and shared with visitors.

At the Uruka night feast, food is cooked communally, often outdoors, and served on banana leaf in a shared meal. At other times of year, an Assamese meal is built around rice with simple, lightly spiced dishes such as *khar* , an alkaline preparation made with raw papaya or pulses, and fish cooked in a thin, tangy broth.

Where to try it: a family or homestay invitation is the best route; local restaurants in Guwahati and Jorhat serve Assamese thali. Ask your host to explain each dish; hospitality in Assam includes explanation. If you eat vegetarian, tell your host in advance.

At a glance

SAY IT	Ask for the name of the dish and what it is made of.
ETIQUETTE	Accept food graciously and ask before photographing a meal in someone's home.
VEG-FRIENDLY?	Many dishes are vegetarian; confirm with your host.

HOW TO REACH

Guwahati and Jorhat, Assam

AIRPORT	Guwahati (GAU) and Jorhat (JRH) both have airports.
RAILWAY	Guwahati (GHY) and Jorhat Town (JTTN).
BY ROAD	Guwahati to Jorhat is roughly 300 km (about 6–7 hours).
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and hired cars; app cabs in Guwahati.

Approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Heritage Without Borders: the Moidams of Charaideo

Assam's first cultural World Heritage Site: the burial mounds of the Ahom kings.

RESEARCHED

In July 2024, UNESCO inscribed the Moidams of the Tai-Ahom dynasty at Charaideo as a World Heritage Site. It was the first cultural property from Northeast India on the list, and India's 43rd World Heritage Site, joining Assam's two natural sites, Kaziranga and Manas.

Moidams are vaulted burial mounds built by the Ahom, who ruled much of the Brahmaputra valley for around six centuries. The site at Charaideo, in Charaideo district roughly 28 km from Sivasagar, was the dynasty's first capital and holds the burials of kings and royal family members.

A visit is quiet and requires context. Read about the Ahom before you go, hire a local guide if possible, and treat the mounds as the graves they are: keep to paths, do not climb the mounds and do not leave rubbish. Confirm opening times and any entry fee with the Archaeological Survey of India or Assam Tourism.

At a glance

ETIQUETTE	Treat it as a cemetery: walk on marked paths, keep voices low, do not climb.
CHECKED	UNESCO inscription July 2024; opening hours and fees must be confirmed locally.

HOW TO REACH

Charaideo Moidams, Charaideo district, Assam

AIRPORT	Jorhat (JRH) or Dibrugarh (DIB), both roughly 80–100 km by road (approximate).
RAILWAY	Simaluguri Junction and Sivasagar Town are the nearest stations; confirm schedules.
BY ROAD	About 28 km from Sivasagar town; roads are good but slow in places.
GETTING AROUND	Hired taxi from Sivasagar or Jorhat; local guide recommended.

Approximate. Confirm access locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO World Heritage Centre (whc.unesco.org)

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Natural Calendar: January

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

RESEARCHED

Winter wetland birds in India: the cool months are the main season to see migratory ducks, waders and other species at wetlands such as Vembanad Lake in Kerala. *Predictable season; numbers vary by year and site.*

Greater adjutant storks in Assam: these large birds begin nesting around the end of the year in villages along the Brahmaputra. Visitors should not approach nests and should go with a guide. *Season is predictable; timing varies.*

Northern lights: the dark months remain a good time in northern Norway, Finland, Iceland and Canada. *Predictable season, uncertain nights.*

Southern summer: January is peak summer in Patagonia and Tasmania, with long days and busy parks. *Weather is variable; plan spare days.*

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Responsible travel: being a good guest at a harvest festival

A festival belongs first to the people who hold it. A few habits for visitors.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

Harvest festivals such as Magh Bihu are family and community events that visitors may be invited to join. The best approach is to treat yourself as a guest.

Wait for an invitation, and go through your host where possible. Dress modestly and comfortably. Ask before photographing people, especially during ritual moments such as lighting the bonfire, and offer to share the photo afterwards. Accept food and drink when offered, and ask what it is before you eat. Do not treat traditional dress as costume. Leave nothing behind, including litter on a riverbank.

If you want to give something back, buy from local makers, and leave a fair tip for people who cook and host.

At a glance

ASK FIRST	Photographs of people, rituals and meals in homes
LEAVE NO TRACE	Take your rubbish with you; avoid single-use plastic

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Budget planning for a first big trip

A simple, honest way to set a number and stick to it.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

1. **Start with the fixed costs:** flights, visas and permits, travel insurance and any pre-booked stays. Write each with its currency and the date you checked the price.

2. **Estimate daily costs separately:** food, local transport, entrance fees and small spending. Use a range, not a single number, and label it an estimate.

3. **Add a buffer of 10 to 15 per cent** for things that change: exchange rates, fuel and airfare.

4. **Check currency:** confirm the exchange rate on the day you budget and again before you leave. Rates move.

5. **Choose where to spend:** pick one or two experiences that matter most and economise elsewhere.

6. **Keep a mix of payment methods:** some cash, a card that works abroad, and a back-up.

7. **Track as you go:** a notes app is enough. Review halfway.

Costs vary widely by place and season; confirm each figure with official or current sources before booking.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 24-Hour Destination: Jaipur

One illustrative day. Hours, traffic and your own pace will change it.

ILLUSTRATIVE ITINERARY · VERIFY LOCALLY

Early morning: Amer Fort, ideally at opening time before tour groups arrive.

Mid-morning: the City Palace and the Jantar Mantar observatory, both in the old city.

Lunch: a local restaurant; ask for the regional dishes.

Afternoon: the bazaars of the walled city, for textiles, jewellery and blue pottery, buying from makers where possible.

Evening: a walk near the Hawa Mahal at golden hour, then dinner.

What to skip if short on time: extra palace museums; see one fort and one old-city monument.

Costs, timings and fees are not listed here and must be confirmed locally.

HOW TO REACH

Jaipur, Rajasthan

AIRPORT	Jaipur International Airport (JAI), roughly 12–15 km from the old city (approximate).
RAILWAY	Jaipur Junction (JP).
BY ROAD	Amer Fort is about 11 km north of central Jaipur.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis, app cabs and auto-rickshaws; walking in the old city.

Timings approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: Fernweh

A German word for longing for places you have not been.

LEXICON

Fernweh (German; roughly “FAIRN-vay”) combines *fern* , meaning far, with *Weh* , meaning ache or pain. It names the longing for distant places, and is often described as the opposite of homesickness.

It is a useful word for January, when many of us decide where we want to go this year. Like many words it does not translate neatly, and it is best not to treat it as a stand-in for a whole culture.

COMMUNITY

Travel Quiz: January

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

QUIZ

1. Which Indian state celebrates Magh Bihu?

2. In which Indian city is the Jantar Mantar observatory that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

3. Which Southeast Asian country celebrates Tet?

4. Which national park in southern Chile is known for its granite towers?

5. Which island state of Australia has Freycinet National Park?

Answers (for the editor's copy, reveal next issue): Assam · Jaipur · Vietnam · Torres del Paine · Tasmania.



Photo: ANKAN · CC BY-SA 4.0

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

COMMUNITY

Your turn: where do you want to be on 1 January 2027?

Reader engagement idea for the next issue.

READER INVITATION

Tell us in 100 words where you would like to wake up on the first morning of next year, and why. A selection may appear in the Readers' Pages with your name, and only with your permission.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Bookshelf

Three books we would pack for a new year.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Great Railway Bazaar by Paul Theroux — a 1975 account of travelling by train across Asia and back. Read it for the carriages and the conversations.

City of Djinns by William Dalrymple — a year in Delhi, with history layered into the streets. Read it for the way place and time overlap.

The Art of Stillness by Pico Iyer — a short book on why going nowhere can matter. Read it for the pause.



Photo: Aravind Manickam · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Madhumita Das · CC BY-SA 4.0

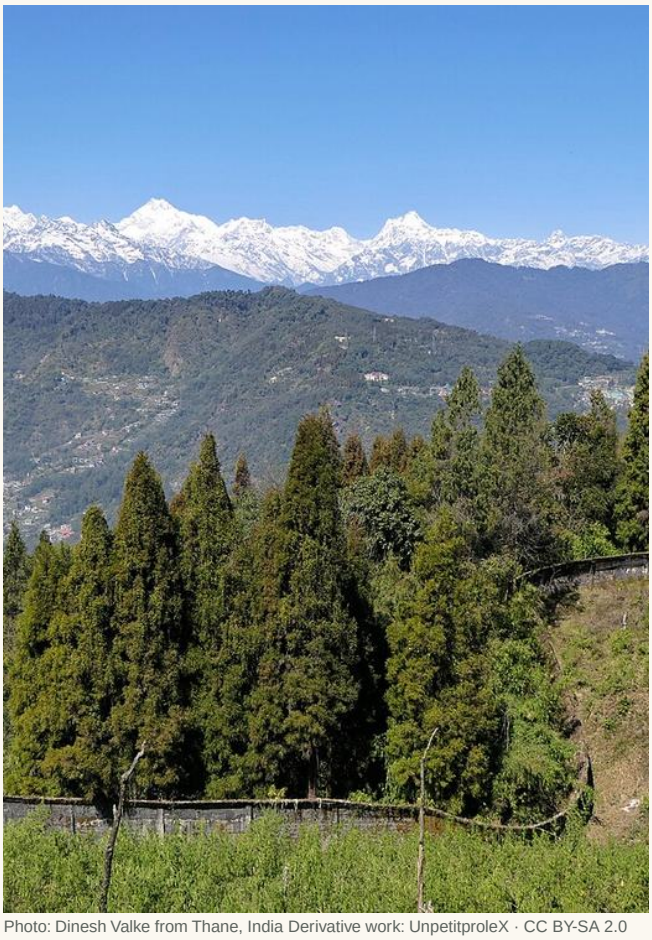


Photo: Dinesh Valke from Thane, India Derivative work: UnpetitproleX · CC BY-SA 2.0

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	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Magh (Bhogali) Bihu	Assam	Uruka (feast night) 14 January; Magh Bihu 15 January 2026	Assam's harvest festival of bonfires, communal feasts and rice cakes..
Jaipur Literature Festival (19th edition)	Hotel Clarks Amer, Jaipur	15–19 January 2026	India's best-known literary festival, with writers and thinkers from many countries..
International Kite Festival	Ahmedabad (Sabarmati Riverfront) and other Gujarat sites	10–14 January 2026 statewide; Ahmedabad 12–14 January	Gujarat's Uttarayan celebrations, with international kite flyers..
Rann Utsav (tent city, Great Rann of Kutch)	Dhordo, Kutch, Gujarat	2025–26 season; sources give end dates between 20 February and 4 March 2026	A seasonal tent city beside the white salt desert; dates vary by source, so confirm before booking..
Losar (Tibetan New Year)	Sikkim and Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh	18 February 2026 (Year of the Fire Horse)	Monastery ceremonies, masked dances and family feasts in Himalayan Buddhist communities..
Khajuraho Dance Festival (52nd edition)	Western Group of Temples, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh	20–26 February 2026	Classical dance performed against a World Heritage temple backdrop..
Holi (Holika Dahan and Rangwali Holi)	Mathura–Vrindavan (Braj), Uttar Pradesh, and across India	Holika Dahan 3 March; Holi 4 March 2026	The festival of colours, celebrated for days in Braj ahead of the main date..

ASIA

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival	Harbin, China	Opens 5 January 2026 and runs into February; closing date set by organisers	Giant ice and snow sculptures in one of China's coldest cities..
Thaipusam	Batu Caves, Selangor, Malaysia	1 February 2026	A large Tamil Hindu festival of devotion, with a procession and the climb to the cave temple..
Sapporo Snow Festival (76th edition)	Odori Park, Sapporo, Japan	4–11 February 2026	Large-scale snow and ice sculptures along Sapporo's central park..
Tet (Vietnamese Lunar New Year)	Vietnam	17 February 2026; official holiday 14–22 February	The country's most important holiday: flower markets, family reunions and a few quiet days..

EUROPE

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Carnevale di Venezia	Venice, Italy	31 January–17 February 2026 (theme: Olympus)	Masks, costume and water shows, themed in 2026 to the Winter Olympics year..

AFRICA & THE AMERICAS

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Rio Carnival	Sambadrome, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Core dates 13–17 February 2026; some sources extend to 18 February	Samba school parades and street parties; book accommodation well ahead..
Quebec Winter Carnival	Quebec City, Canada	About 6–15 February 2026 (check the organiser)	Snow sculptures, parades and winter games in Quebec City..

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

OCEANIA & INTERNATIONAL

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras	Sydney, Australia	Festival 13 February–1 March; parade Saturday 28 February 2026	A three-week festival ending with a night-time parade along Oxford Street..

THE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Format example

Dated developments up to 1 January 2026, with source links. Each is labelled announced or implemented. Re-confirm before relying on any of them.

IMPLEMENTED: Navi Mumbai International Airport began commercial flights on 25 December 2025, with IndiGo, Akasa Air and Air India Express among the first operators. Source: The Statesman, 25 December 2025. www.thestatesman.com

ANNOUNCED: On 1 January 2026 Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the first Vande Bharat sleeper train would run between Guwahati and Howrah in January. Source: IANS, 1 January 2026. ianslive.in

IMPLEMENTED (phased): The EU's Entry/Exit System began its progressive start on 12 October 2025 at external borders, with a planned phase-in over about six months. Source: European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs. home-affairs.ec.europa.eu

ANNOUNCED: Vietnam's prime minister approved a nine-day Tet holiday for 14 to 22 February 2026. Source: Vietnam Government news portal, 14 October 2025. en.baochinhphu.vn

IMPLEMENTED: Thailand's Digital Arrival Card has been mandatory for foreign visitors since 1 May 2025, to be completed online before arrival. Source: Royal Thai Embassy pages. abudhabi.thaiembassy.org

Tell us where you are going next

WRITE	editor@travaah.com
CALL	+91 70022 09781
PLAN	travaah.com/planner
CONTRIBUTE	Send a story or photograph via the contact page



Photo: Sourabh.biswas003 · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Original: Nina R from Africa Derivative work: UnpetitproleX · CC BY 2.0



Photo: KennyOMG · CC BY-SA 4.0

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.

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