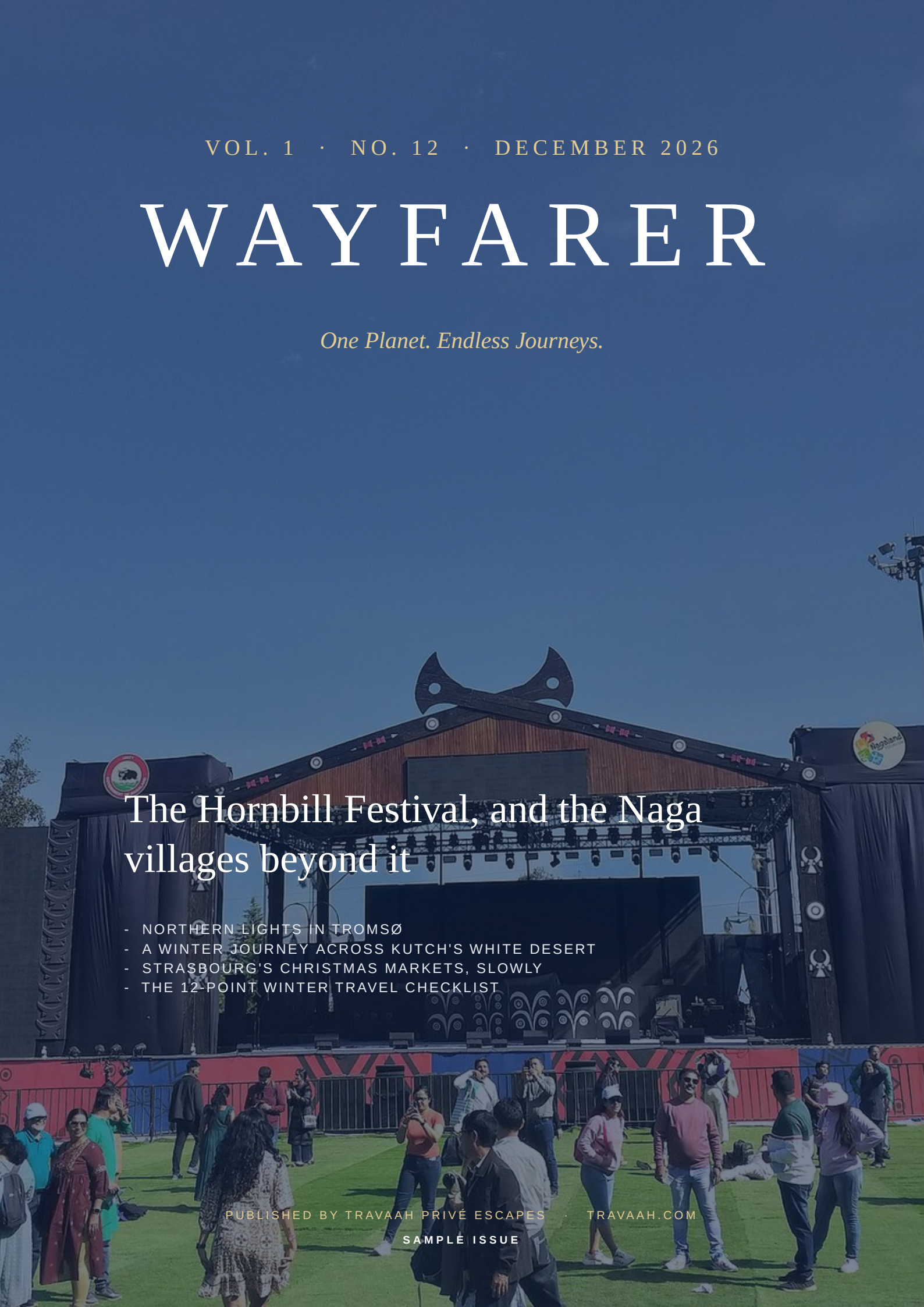
VOL. 1 · NO. 12 · DECEMBER 2026

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.



The Hornbill Festival, and the Naga villages beyond it

- NORTHERN LIGHTS IN TROMSØ
- A WINTER JOURNEY ACROSS KUTCH'S WHITE DESERT
- STRASBOURG'S CHRISTMAS MARKETS, SLOWLY
- THE 12-POINT WINTER TRAVEL CHECKLIST

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SAMPLE ISSUE

EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Festivals of the World

A note from the editor

Some journeys start with a date on a calendar. For a lot of us, December is that date: a festival we have meant to see for years, a family gathering that is also an excuse to go somewhere, a winter we want to spend under a different sky.

This first issue of Wayfarer is built around that impulse, but with a rule we intend to keep: a festival is a doorway, not a destination. The drums at Kisama are extraordinary. So are the terraced fields of Khonoma, a kitchen in Kohima, a quiet field of rice stubble in the evening light. We want to take you through the door and out the other side.

You will also find things we have chosen not to do. We will not call a place “hidden” if a thousand people already know it. We will not tell you a date is confirmed if the organiser has not said so. And where a story is a proposal rather than a finished piece of reporting, we will say so on the page — as we do throughout this sample issue.

Read slowly. Write back. Tell us where you are going next.

Read slowly. Write back. Tell us where you are going next.

EDITOR'S DISPATCH

- Gitanjali Gautam

Sample issue

WHAT THIS IS	A demonstration of the Wayfarer format. Features are researched from public sources and need field verification.
NOT REAL	Commissions, briefs and offers are proposals or templates. Dates are provisional until confirmed with organisers.
CHECKED	10 November 2026

December is when the calendar gets loud. Drums in a Naga hillside arena, bells in a Strasbourg square, a white salt desert glowing under a full moon. This first issue follows celebrations to the places that make them — and then goes a little further, to the villages, kitchens and quiet corners around the party.

No one can promise the aurora. Give yourself good odds, and a good trip either way.

FROM THE TROMSØ FEATURE

DID YOU KNOW

The Hornbill Festival is named for the great hornbill, a bird that appears in Naga folklore, headgear and songs.

DID YOU KNOW

Strasbourg's Christmas market is regularly described as one of the oldest in Europe.

DID YOU KNOW

Sri Lanka has two monsoons, so there is almost always a good coast somewhere on the island.

PLAN FOR WEATHER

Wind can close the Table Mountain cableway in Cape Town at short notice — keep a spare day.

TRAVEL TIP

Battery life drops fast in the cold. Keep your phone and spare battery in an inner pocket, close to your body.

A festival is a doorway, not a destination.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DISPATCH

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

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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.

TRAVEL TIP

Ask before photographing a person, particularly at close range. A smile and a question go a long way.

TRAVEL TIP

Choose guides who are honest about the odds, and who will move to clearer skies when needed.

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



COVER STORY

Ten days of drums: the Hornbill Festival

Every December, Nagaland gathers its tribes in one hillside village. What to see, how to go well, and why the festival is only the beginning.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: Sarangakrishnachetia · CC BY-SA 4.0

BEFORE DAWN, THE ROAD up to Kisama is already busy. Minibuses grind past with their windows steamed, and men in woven shawls walk the last stretch in twos and threes, carrying folded costumes. The air smells of woodsmoke and wet pine. By the time the morning sun reaches the arena, the first of the performing groups has begun to sing.

The Hornbill Festival is held every December at Kisama, the Naga Heritage Village a short drive from Kohima, and it is traditionally spread across the first ten days of the month. The state government organises it, and it is named for the great hornbill, a bird that appears in Naga folklore, headgear and songs. Its idea is simple and generous: every major tribe of Nagaland sets up a traditional house, or morung, in the village grounds, and takes turns in the central arena to perform songs, war dances, games and rituals.



An Angami Naga hut. Photo: JyotiPN · CC BY-SA 4.0

What a visitor sees depends on where they stand. The arena has the pageantry, and the dances are worth watching with attention to who is dancing: whole families, from teenagers to elders, in the attire of their own tribe. The morungs have the conversation. This is where you can sit with a host, try rice beer or tea, ask what a pattern on a shawl means, and be told, politely, when a question is the wrong one. The evening Night Bazaar in Kohima has the food and the music.

It also has crowds. Accommodation in and around Kohima fills early, and prices rise accordingly. Planning for a few days either side of the festival makes it easier to see the surrounding villages and to avoid arriving only for the busiest days.

How to go well: ask before photographing a person, particularly at close range. Buy crafts from the people who make them. Treat the war dances as living tradition, not as costume. And plan time away from the arena — the next feature in this issue explains where.

At a glance

WHERE	Kisama Heritage Village, near Kohima, Nagaland
WHEN	Traditionally 1–10 December every year (confirm the official schedule before booking)
GETTING THERE	Nearest airport: Dimapur (about 70 km by road); nearest major rail head: Dimapur. Shared and private taxis run to Kohima.
PERMITS	Indian visitors from outside Nagaland generally need an Inner Line Permit; rules for foreign nationals differ. Confirm with Nagaland Tourism.
BOOK AHEAD	Stays in Kohima and Kisama fill early; plan several months ahead (provisional advice).
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — dates, permits and prices must be re-confirmed with the organiser.

HOW TO REACH

Kisama Heritage Village, near Kohima, Nagaland

AIRPORT	Dimapur Airport (DMU), roughly 70 km from Kohima — the nearest airport.
RAILWAY	Dimapur Railway Station (DMV), Nagaland's main rail head, roughly 70–75 km away. Kohima itself has no railway.
BY ROAD	Kisama is about 12 km from Kohima. The Dimapur–Kohima road (NH29) takes about 2.5–3 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and shared cabs from Dimapur; festival shuttles run from Kohima in festival week.

Distances approximate — confirm locally. Distances approximate - verify.

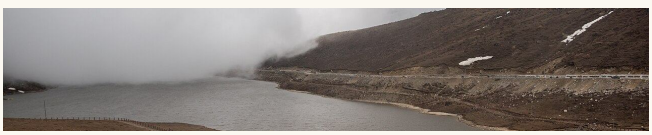
Official sources: Nagaland Tourism (official) (www.nagalandtourism.com)

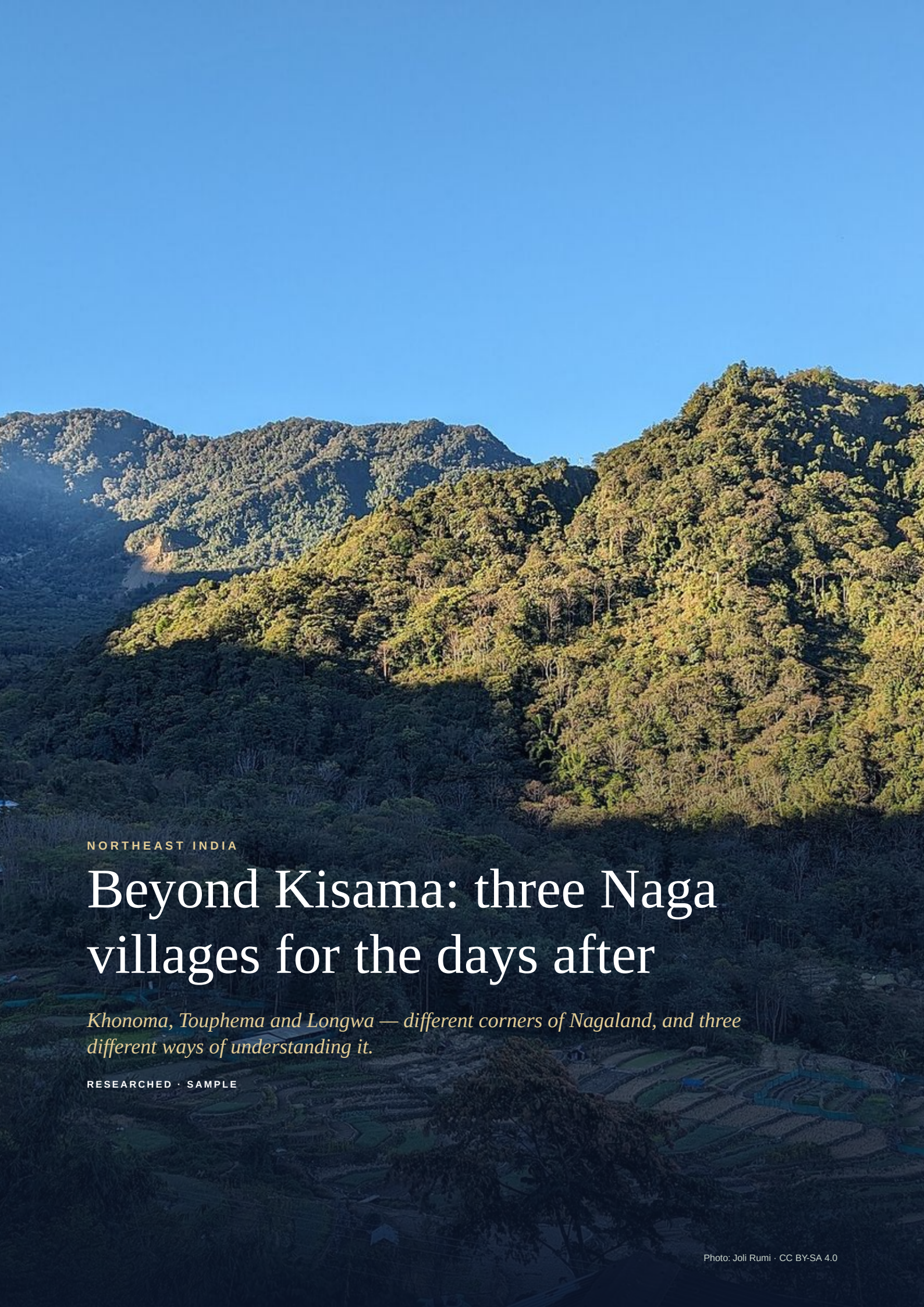
Read slowly. Write back. Tell us where you are going next.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Treat the war dances as living tradition, not as costume.

FROM THE HORNBILL FESTIVAL FEATURE


Photo: Rohit Sharma · CC BY-SA 4.0



NORTHEAST INDIA

Beyond Kisama: three Naga villages for the days after

Khonoma, Touphema and Longwa — different corners of Nagaland, and three different ways of understanding it.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: Joli Rumi · CC BY-SA 4.0

ONCE THE FESTIVAL ENDS, the road out of Kohima leads to places with a different pace. This is a short guide to three villages that each tell part of the story, based on public tourism information and published reporting. A field writer with local contacts should verify and enrich it before it is published as a finished feature.

Khonoma, an Angami village west of Kohima, is known across India for its terraced rice fields, its history of resistance to British rule, and a community decision to protect its forests and wildlife. A walk through its stone-paved lanes and stepped fields is as much a lesson in community land management as a scenic outing.



An Angami Naga hut. Photo: JyotiPN · CC BY-SA 4.0

Touphema, also Angami, offers an organised, community-run tourist village with traditional-style cottages, a model for how a village can host visitors on its own terms.

Longwa, in Mon district in the north, is the village of the Konyak Nagas, with the international border running through the settlement. It is remote, and travel there takes planning, time and local help.

A note on responsible visiting: Naga communities host visitors, but they are not exhibits. Stay with local families where homestays exist, ask before photographing, pay fairly, and follow the guidance of your host.



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

At a glance

BEST TIME	October to April, with December the busiest month
GETTING THERE	Khonoma is within a few hours of Kohima by road; Longwa is a long journey north and needs a full day or more each way.
PERMITS	Inner Line Permit rules apply; additional rules may apply in border areas. Confirm with Nagaland Tourism.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Stay in homestays where possible; ask before taking portraits; do not treat traditional dress as costume.

HOW TO REACH

Khonoma · Touphema · Longwa, Nagaland

AIRPORT	Dimapur (DMU) for Khonoma and Touphema. For Longwa (Mon district), Dibrugarh Airport (DIB) in Assam is the usual gateway.
RAILWAY	Dimapur for the Kohima villages; Dibrugarh or Tinsukia-side stations in Assam for Mon.
BY ROAD	Khonoma is roughly 20 km west of Kohima; Touphema is a longer drive south; Longwa is a very long road journey from Kohima — plan a full day each way.
GETTING AROUND	Hire a local taxi or guide; tell your homestay when you expect to arrive.

Roads and permits change — confirm with Nagaland Tourism. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Nagaland Tourism (official) (www.nagalandtourism.com)

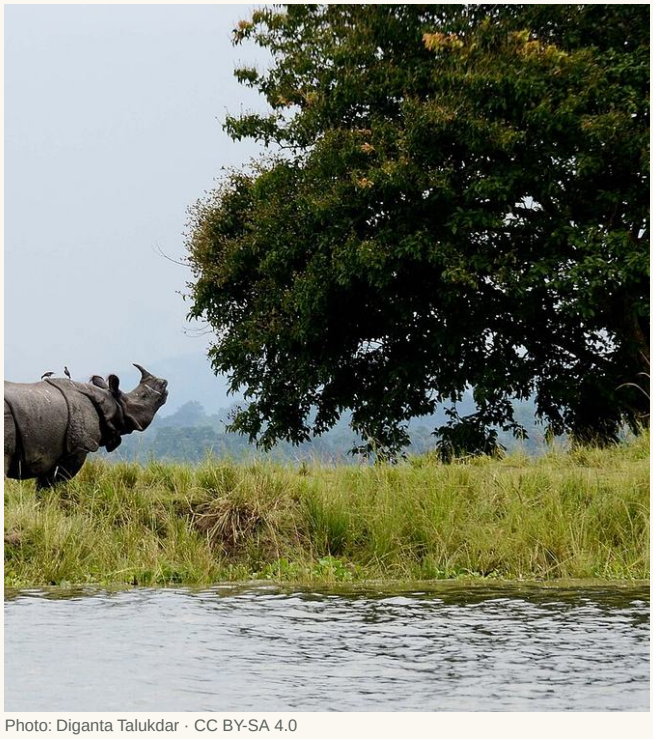


Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0



INDIA

The white desert: Kutch in the cool season

A salt flat the size of a small country, a tent city, and the craft villages that give the landscape its human scale.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: Rudolph.A.furtado · CC0

IN THE COOL SEASON, the Great Rann of Kutch in Gujarat turns into one of the strangest landscapes in India: a vast seasonal salt marsh that dries into a hard, pale expanse reaching to the horizon. A seasonal tent-city festival, Rann Utsav, is usually held here through the winter months, with dates set by Gujarat Tourism each year.

The desert itself is the spectacle, especially around sunrise and sunset and on moonlit nights. But the larger story lies in the villages around it, where embroidery, block printing, bell-making and leatherwork have been practised for generations. A day spent with artisans in places such as Bhujodi or Nirona explains more about Kutch than any viewpoint.

A day spent with artisans explains more about Kutch than any viewpoint.

Practicalities matter. Access to the white desert needs a permit, nights can be cold, and the busiest weekends fill the tent city early. Plan for several days: one for the desert, the rest for craft villages, wetlands and the old town of Bhuj.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly November to February (the festival dates vary — confirm with Gujarat Tourism)
GETTING THERE	Bhuj has an airport and rail head; the white desert at Dhordo is a drive from Bhuj.
PERMITS	A permit is required to enter the white desert area; confirm the current process before travelling.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Buy directly from artisans; keep to marked paths on the salt flats; avoid leaving waste in the desert.



Photo: Extreminatethejuice · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOW TO REACH

White Desert, Dhordo, Great Rann of Kutch, Gujarat

AIRPORT	Bhuj Airport (BHJ), roughly 80 km from Dhordo.
RAILWAY	Bhuj Railway Station; Gandhidham is the larger rail junction nearby.
BY ROAD	Bhuj to Dhordo is about 80 km (around 1.5–2 hours).
GETTING AROUND	Taxis from Bhuj; seasonal festival shuttles; a permit is needed for the white desert.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Rann Utsav (official) (www.rannutsav.net)

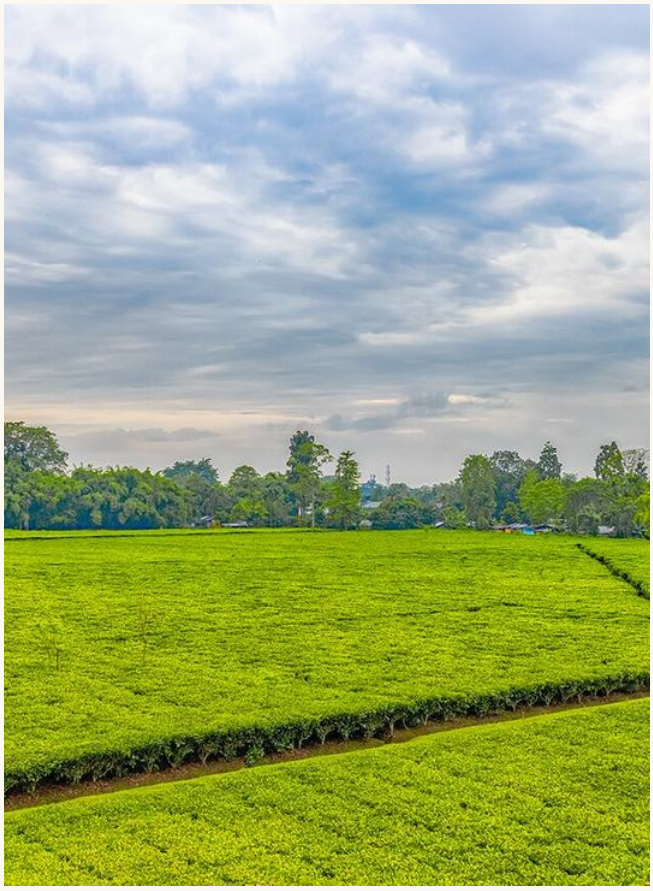


Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Rumelade · CC BY-SA 4.0



ASIA

Sri Lanka in the dry season: coast, tea and train

Why December to March suits the south and west coasts, and how to link them with the hill country without hurrying.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: Gayomiw · CC BY-SA 4.0

SRI LANKA HAS TWO monsoons, which means there is almost always a good coast somewhere. From roughly December to March, the south and west coasts are generally in their drier, calmer season, which suits a journey that begins at the beach and then climbs into the hills.

The classic combination — a few days on the coast, then a long train ride into the tea country, then the ancient cities of the cultural triangle — works because each part restores a different kind of attention. Allow time for the train: its pace is the point.

Look for stays that employ and buy locally, and ask your hosts how the tea, spice and fishing economies are changing. The answers are often more interesting than the viewpoints.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly December to March for the south and west coasts (the east coast is best in a different season)
ENTRY	Visa and electronic travel authorisation rules change — check the official Sri Lanka immigration site and your passport's requirements on our visa guide.
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — re-confirm before travelling.

HOW TO REACH

South and west coasts, hill country, Sri Lanka

AIRPORT	Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB), about 35 km north of Colombo.
RAILWAY	Colombo Fort for the coastal line to Galle; Kandy and Ella stations for the hill-country line.
BY ROAD	Expressways link the airport to Colombo and the south; hill roads are slow — allow extra time.
GETTING AROUND	Trains for the hills; tuk-tuks, taxis and private drivers for short hops.

Timetables change; book scenic train seats in advance. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Sri Lanka Tourism (official) (www.srilanka.travel)



Photo: Arunachal2007 · CC BY-SA 4.0

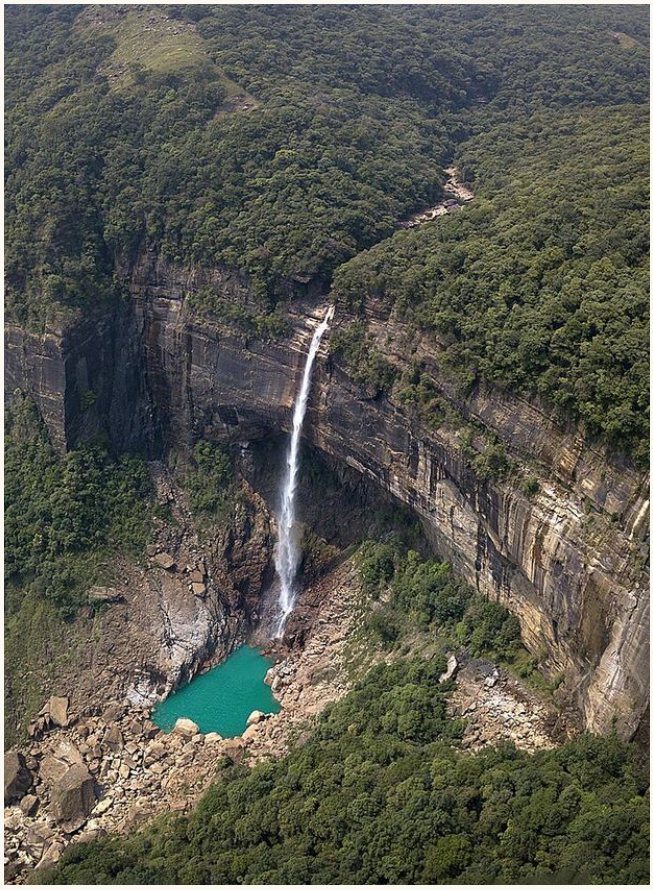


Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: ANKAN · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Tromsø: a patient guide to the northern lights

No one can promise the aurora. Here is how to give yourself good odds — and a good trip either way.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: Christoph Strässler · CC BY-SA 2.0

TROMSØ, IN NORTHERN NORWAY, sits well inside the Arctic Circle and is one of the most popular places to look for the aurora. The season runs through the dark months — roughly late September to March — but the lights are a natural phenomenon, not a performance, and visibility depends on solar activity, clear skies and darkness.

The sensible way to plan is to stay several nights, so that a cloudy evening does not end the trip, and to pick a guide who is honest about odds and who moves to clearer skies when needed. Dress for serious cold, and carry a spare battery if you intend to photograph; cold drains them quickly.

A trip planned around a place and a season is not a gamble.

Build the rest of the journey around the Arctic winter itself: daytime blue light, snow, wildlife and warm interiors. A trip planned only around one sighting is a gamble; a trip planned around a place and a season is not.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly late September to March; darkness and clear skies matter more than the exact date
REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS	Sightings are likely over a week but never guaranteed.
RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL	Choose small-group guides; avoid trespassing on private land for photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Tromsø, Troms, northern Norway

AIRPORT	Tromsø Airport, Langnes (TOS), about 4 km from the centre; direct flights from Oslo and other Norwegian cities.
RAILWAY	There is no railway to Tromsø. The nearest rail station is Narvik, several hours away by road.
BY ROAD	The E8 and E6 connect to the rest of Norway; coastal ferries and the Hurtigruten also call.
GETTING AROUND	Buses and taxis in town; most aurora tours include hotel pick-up.

Check flight connections early; winter schedules change. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Norway (official) (www.visitnorway.com)



Photo: Madhumita Das · CC BY-SA 4.0

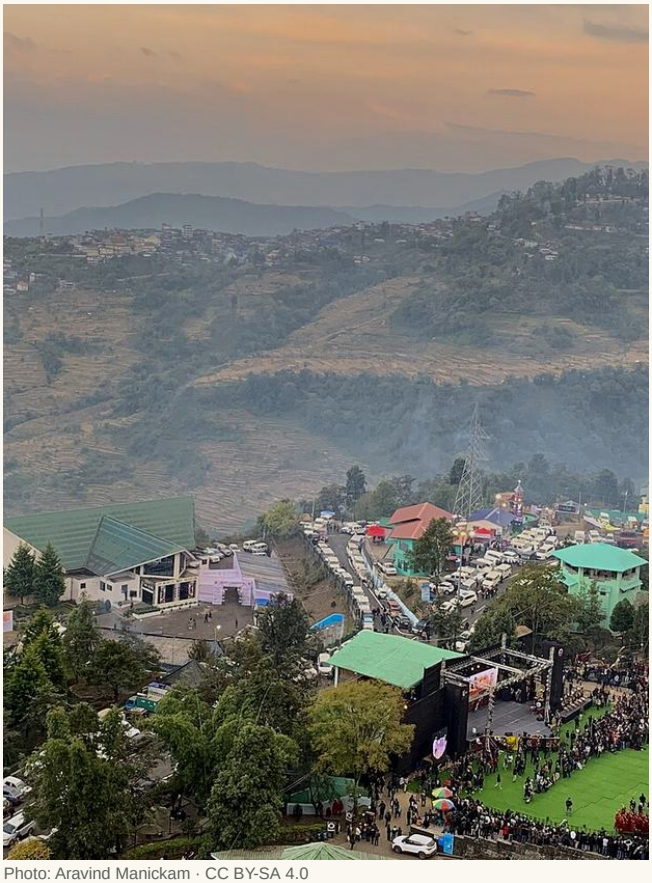


Photo: Aravind Manickam · CC BY-SA 4.0

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



AROUND THE WORLD

Alsace, slowly: Christmas markets without the crush

Strasbourg's market is among Europe's oldest. Pairing it with the smaller towns of the Alsace wine route changes the experience.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: Jorge Franganillo · CC BY 2.0

STRASBOURG'S CHRISTMAS MARKET BEGAN in 1570 as the Christkindelsmarik, a market dedicated to the Christ Child, and its organisers describe it as one of the oldest in Europe. For more than a century it was held on Place Broglie, and in 1992 the city took the title Capitale de Noël. A giant fir tree on Place Kléber arrived in 2000, and a charity-led Village du Partage in 2002.

In 2020 the market was cancelled for the first time in centuries because of the pandemic. A redesign followed, based on a citizens' jury, with a focus on local crafts, and in 2025 the city announced an ISO 20121 sustainability certification for the event. That history matters when you visit: the best moments are usually at the stalls of makers and in the quieter side streets, not in the central crush.

A good strategy is to treat the city as one stop among several: visit on a weekday morning, and spend evenings in smaller Alsatian towns where the markets are quieter and the cooking is local. Eat what is in season — tarte flambée, choucroute, mulled wine, pain d'épices — and note that opening dates and hours are set each year by the organisers. Check the official market pages before booking trains or hotels.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Late November to the days before Christmas (confirm each year's official dates)
GETTING THERE	Strasbourg has an airport and high-speed rail links with Paris.
BOOK AHEAD	Hotels in Strasbourg fill early during market weeks.



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

HOW TO REACH

Strasbourg and the Alsace wine route, France

AIRPORT	Strasbourg Airport (SXB), about 12 km from the centre; EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg for Colmar and the south.
RAILWAY	Strasbourg railway station, with fast TGV trains from Paris (roughly 2 hours); regional trains to Colmar, Sélestat and other towns.
BY ROAD	Autoroutes from Paris, Basel and Germany; parking in the city centre is limited in market weeks.
GETTING AROUND	Trams and buses in Strasbourg; regional trains for the wine route.

Market dates and hours are set each year — confirm on the official site. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Strasbourg Christmas — our history (official) (www.strasbourg.eu); Strasbourg Christmas (official) (noel.strasbourg.eu)



Photo: Sourabh.biswas003 · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Cape Town in summer: mountain, ocean, vineyards

A counter-season option for readers who would rather have December sunshine than December snow.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Photo: South African Tourism from South Africa · CC BY 2.0

DECEMBER FALLS IN THE southern summer, which makes Cape Town a natural alternative for readers who would rather spend it outdoors. Table Mountain, the coastal drive to the Cape Peninsula, and the Winelands inland make an easy circuit, with long daylight and generally dry weather.

Summer is also peak season: plan accommodation and key bookings early, and keep a day free for weather — wind can close the Table Mountain cableway at short notice. Choose operators who explain how they support local communities, and be aware of safety advice for the areas you visit.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly November to March for warm, dry weather
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on your passport; check the official South African government site.
BOOK AHEAD	Peak-season accommodation fills early.

HOW TO REACH

Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa

AIRPORT	Cape Town International Airport (CPT), about 20 km from the centre.
RAILWAY	Cape Town station has suburban Metrorail services; long-distance passenger travel is mainly by luxury rail, coach or air.
BY ROAD	The N2 and N1 link the city to the Garden Route and the Winelands; most visitors hire a car or use tours.
GETTING AROUND	MyCiTi buses, ride-hailing apps and guided tours; take advice on areas to avoid after dark.

Wind can close the Table Mountain cableway at short notice. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Cape Town Tourism (official) (www.capetown.travel)



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

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The village that stopped hunting

In Khonoma, a Naga village above Kohima, a bloody week in 1993 became the start of India's best-known community conservation story.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER

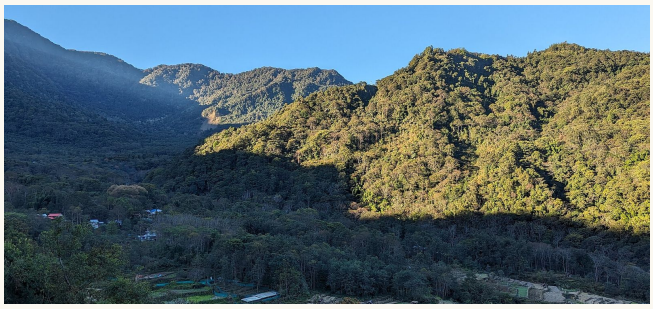


Photo: Joli Rumi · CC BY-SA 4.0

Khonoma sits at around 5,300 feet, an Angami village that residents describe as roughly 700 years old. Hunting was part of life here, and in 1993 it went badly wrong: during a Christmas hunting competition, about 300 Blyth's tragopans, an endangered pheasant, were killed in a single week.

For some villagers, that number was a turning point. Reporting first published by Reasons to be Cheerful records villager Vilazosie Punyu on the realisation that “We realized that disaster lay ahead.” By 1998 the community had created the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary, covering about 20 square kilometres, a sixth of village land, and described as India's first community-led conservation project. Hunting and logging were banned across the village in the years that followed; sources differ on the exact year of the formal ban, so we say only that it came between 1998 and 2001.

The change was not free. A Gerald Durrell Memorial Fund grant paid village men as forest wardens for three years. Khonoma opened its first homestay in 2006 and now has about a dozen. In 2022 it received around 2,500 visitors, whose registration fee helps pay for forest patrols and village development. About 25 members of the Khonoma Youth Association patrol the forest, and three-day hunting permits are still allowed for people dealing with crop-raiding animals — a trade-off the village is open about.

For a traveller, the lesson is practical. Stay in a homestay, take a local guide, pay the registration fee and remember that the paddy terraces you photograph are someone's livelihood. A tourism committee member quoted in the reporting puts it simply: tourism is community.

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	Reasons to be Cheerful, republished by Vikalp Sangam, 3 May 2023
VILLAGERS NAMED IN THE REPORT	Vilazosie Punyu, Kevichulie Meyase, Pelesali Kuotsu, Zaskie Khate, Vibu Iralu
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. We have not spoken to the people named.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Khonoma Village Council and tourism committee through Nagaland Tourism or a local operator; get written consent for names, quotes and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Khonoma, Kohima district, Nagaland

AIRPORT	Dimapur Airport (DMU), roughly 70 km from Kohima, the usual gateway.
RAILWAY	Dimapur Railway Station (DMV); Kohima has no railway.
BY ROAD	Khonoma is roughly 20 km west of Kohima by road (about an hour); Dimapur to Kohima takes 2.5–3 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Hire a taxi from Kohima, or book through your homestay. Carry cash.

Registration fee, permits and homestay availability change — confirm with Nagaland Tourism. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (Vikalp Sangam) (vikalpsangam.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

From hunters to guardians: the Amur falcons of Doyang

A reservoir in Wokha district, a flock of falcons on a journey of tens of thousands of kilometres, and a community that chose a different pride.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER

Every autumn, Amur falcons gather around the Doyang reservoir in Nagaland's Wokha district on a migration that carries them between Asia and southern Africa. In October 2012, journalist-turned-conservationist Bano Haralu led a team to Doyang to check reports of mass hunting. Her account, in The Better India, describes nets set across the water and thousands of birds trapped each day, sold for about Rs 25 apiece.

Reports of the total kill that autumn range from about 100,000 to 150,000 birds, the highest ever recorded in India.

The Morung Express reported on the people behind the nets: fishermen of Pangti village, squeezed by a dam that had flooded farmland and by elephants that damaged what remained. They were not villains but a community short of options.

What changed was an offer of another identity. Haralu founded the Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust in 2013, and the village councils of Pangti, Ashaa and Sungro declared hunting the falcons illegal and punishable. Schoolchildren were taught to use binoculars and trace the birds' migration. In November 2013 three falcons were fitted with satellite tags and given local names: Naga, Wokha and Pangti. Pangti's village council chairman, Ronchamo Shitiri, summed up the hope: “We will be known for something more than hunters.”

Reported kills in Nagaland fell to zero the following year, after the campaign. If you go, go in the right month, hire a local guide and treat Doyang as a place where people are still earning their reputation.

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 Morung Express, 3 January 2014; The Better India, 22 September 2016; EastMojo (2020, updated 2022)
PEOPLE NAMED	Bano Haralu; Ronchamo Shitiri and Tajolo Jami of Pangti village
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting; kill figures vary by source.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact the Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust and the Pangti village council for consent, interviews and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Doyang Reservoir, Wokha district, Nagaland

AIRPORT	Dimapur Airport (DMU) is the nearest, roughly 100 km away by road.
RAILWAY	Dimapur Railway Station (DMV).
BY ROAD	Wokha town is a few hours from Dimapur or Kohima; Doyang is a further drive from Wokha — ask a local guide for the best route.
GETTING AROUND	Hire a taxi and a local bird guide; arrange accommodation in Wokha in advance.

The falcons are usually present around October to November — confirm timing with local conservation groups. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: The Morung Express report (morungexpress.com); The Better India profile (thebetterindia.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The boat-makers of Majuli

On a shrinking river island, a centuries-old craft is struggling against the river that made it necessary.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Udit Kapoor · CC BY-SA 4.0

Majuli, in the Brahmaputra, once covered about 1,250 square kilometres. By 2014 it had shrunk to about 483 square kilometres, and some 170,000 people still live there. On an island where bridges are scarce, boats are not a hobby but a lifeline.

Reporting by IndiaSpend, also carried by Scroll.in, visited Salmora, where about 80% of the boats used on the island are made. The village has lost almost half of its land. Boat-builders Prasanna Bora and Dharmeswar Hazarika told the reporter how erosion and tree-felling rules are changing their work: the hollong tree, Assam's state tree and an endangered species, was the favoured timber, and felling trees on the island is now prohibited. Bora's summary: “Every year we lose land and forest to erosion.”

A 16-foot boat costs around Rs 35,000, more if the timber has to be bought from off the island. Annual erosion has risen sharply, from about 1.75 square kilometres a year in 1975–90 to 6.7 square kilometres a year in 2005–17. The 1950 earthquake, which raised the riverbed with silt, is widely cited as a factor.

Visitors can help by choosing operators that employ local boatmen, by travelling in the dry season when the ferries run reliably, and by understanding that Majuli's charms are fragile.



Photo: KennyOMG · 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	IndiaSpend, republished by Scroll.in, 19 February 2024
PEOPLE NAMED	Prasanna Bora (44) and Dharmeswar Hazarika (43), boat-makers, Salmora
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach through Majuli Tourism or a local operator; seek the boat-makers' consent and credit them.

HOW TO REACH

Majuli, Jorhat district, Assam

AIRPORT	Jorhat Airport (JRH), about 20 km from Jorhat town; Dibrugarh (DIB) is the alternative.
RAILWAY	Jorhat Town / Jorhat railway stations, or Mariani Junction.
BY ROAD	Reach the ferry terminal at Nimati Ghat, near Jorhat (about 15 km from Jorhat); the ferry to Majuli takes roughly 1–1.5 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Ferries, then taxis, bicycles or scooters on the island; book homestays in advance.

Ferry timings and water levels change with the season — confirm locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (Scroll.in) (scroll.in)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The block-printers who rebuilt a village

After the 2001 earthquake, Kutch's Ajrakh printers moved, rebuilt and rediscovered natural dyes.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER

Ajrakh, the deep blue-and-crimson resist-printed cloth of Kutch and Sindh, depends on river water. When the Dhamadka river dried up in the 1990s, the printing community there began planning a move. The earthquake of 26 January 2001, which devastated Kutch, accelerated everything: in Dhamadka alone, 105 community members died.

The community's new home, Ajrakhpur near Bhuj, was built afterwards. Reporting by Local Samosa, on the 25th anniversary of the quake, follows master printer Dr Ismail Mohamed Khatri and Mukesh Bhanani of the Kala Raksha

Trust. It records an exhibition titled Resurgence 2026 at the CSMVS museum in Mumbai, marking 25 years since the first Resurgence show of 2007–08, and a change in the craft's reputation: Bhanani says what has changed most is perception.

Another change is in the dye-pots. Artisans moved away from synthetic dyes after health concerns and returned to natural dyes, though researchers warn that excess iron in groundwater is a threat to Ajrakh dyeing. If you visit, buy from a workshop that explains its process, and treat the stories you hear as the work of families who lost people, homes and a river.

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	Local Samosa, 26 February 2026
PEOPLE NAMED	Dr Ismail Mohamed Khatri; Mukesh Bhanani (Kala Raksha Trust)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting and leaves out private losses the families may not wish to see repeated.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Khatri workshop through Khamir or Kala Raksha Trust; obtain written consent before using any personal detail.

HOW TO REACH

Ajrakhpur, near Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat

AIRPORT	Bhuj Airport (BHJ), a short drive away.
RAILWAY	Bhuj Railway Station; Gandhidham is the main junction nearby.
BY ROAD	Ajrakhpur is on the outskirts of Bhuj, a drive of roughly 15–20 minutes.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and auto-rickshaws from Bhuj; many craft villages are best visited with a local driver.

Workshops may need advance appointments — confirm before you go. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (Local Samosa) (www.localsamosa.com)



Photo: Ravi Dwivedi · CC BY-SA 4.0

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Telling their own story: Khayelitsha's tourism pioneers

In Cape Town's largest township, two residents turned local knowledge into a business that welcomes visitors on its own terms.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: South African Tourism from South Africa · CC BY 2.0

Khayelitsha is Cape Town's largest township. In 2015, residents Buntu Matole and Ayanda Cuba founded ABCD Concepts, a tourism initiative aimed at tackling unemployment, poverty and crime. Their first year brought just three guests. According to News24 in April 2025, it now brings more than 1,000 visitors a year, 98% of them international, and it became the first township-based experience host on Airbnb in South Africa.

The experiences, based at Lookout Hill, steer visitors toward local businesses and include cycling tours and cooking with local families. Matole explains the idea: “We saw an opportunity to teach people about Khayelitsha.”

Township tourism is a sensitive subject. The best versions are led by residents, pay local people fairly and avoid turning poverty into a spectacle. If you go, book with a resident-led host, ask before photographing anyone, and spend your money in the neighbourhood.

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	News24, 1 April 2025
PEOPLE NAMED	Buntu Matole and Ayanda Cuba, ABCD Concepts (surname spelling varies between sources)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting; confirm spellings and details with the hosts.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact ABCD Concepts, listed on Cape Town Tourism's Khayelitsha neighbourhood guide, for consent and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa

AIRPORT	Cape Town International Airport (CPT), roughly 15–20 km away.
RAILWAY	Khayelitsha has Metrorail stations, but most visitors travel with a host or a guided tour for safety and ease.
BY ROAD	About 30–40 minutes from central Cape Town by road, depending on traffic.
GETTING AROUND	Book a resident-led tour and arrange pick-up; take local advice about timing and safety.

Take local advice on safety and travel times. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (News24) (www.news24.com)

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “My first festival in a place I did not expect”

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) by someone who attended a festival they had not planned for, in a place they had not expected to visit. The story should have a clear setting, one specific moment, one human encounter and a changed view.

What we need from the contributor: a true story; photographs they own, with permission to publish; a short trip recap (destination and dates, duration, route, budget range with currency and date, transport and accommodation, one thing they wish they 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: Exotica489 · CC0

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “The long way home, by winter train”

A brief for a rail journey told from the window seat. Not a published story.

PROPOSED COMMISSION · NOT A REAL STORY

What we want: 800–1,200 words on a train journey taken in winter — the route, the other passengers, the changing landscape — with a Trip Recap panel (route, duration, cost with date, one practical tip).

Who: a traveller who has actually taken the journey. We commission real experiences only.

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

The World Through Local Eyes — brief for a Naga weaver or guide

Interview brief for next month's local-voice column. Not a real interview.

PROPOSED INTERVIEW BRIEF · NOT A REAL INTERVIEW

Subject: a weaver, guide or community host from Nagaland, found through a trusted local contact or community organisation and approached with consent.

Questions we would explore: what visitors misunderstand about the festival and the villages; what the community is proud of; how traditions are changing; what responsible visitors should know; what the community wishes travellers would respect.

Standards: the subject sees their quotes before publication; they are paid for their time; photographs are taken with permission and credited.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: Naga kitchens

Smoke, ferment and heat — a cuisine with a logic of its own.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Naga cooking is built on a few strong ideas: smoke, fermentation and the careful use of chilli. Pork is often smoked or boiled with bamboo shoot. Axone, a fermented soybean preparation, gives dishes a deep, pungent savour. And the Naga king chilli, famous for its heat, appears sparingly and with respect.

In many homes, food is cooked simply, with little oil, and served with rice. Visitors who are used to restaurant curries will find the flavours very different — and worth approaching with curiosity.

Where to try it: Kohima's local restaurants, the Hornbill Festival morungs and homestays that cook for guests. Check ahead if you eat vegetarian; many dishes involve meat or fish, though a good host can usually cook greens, rice, lentils and vegetables.

At a glance

SAY IT	Ask for the dish name and what it is made of — a polite way to learn.
ETIQUETTE	Accept food graciously; ask before photographing a meal in someone's home.
VEG-FRIENDLY?	Possible with notice; confirm with your host in advance.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Heritage Without Borders: Kohima, 1944

A hill town, a tennis court, and one of the pivotal battles of the Second World War in Asia.

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

In April 1944, Japanese and Allied forces fought at Kohima, in one of the decisive engagements of the Burma campaign. The Kohima War Cemetery, maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, now lies on the slopes where much of the fighting took place, and is a quiet place to learn about the battle and the people who died.

Visit respectfully, with time to read the memorials and understand the history before you go. The Kohima Museum and the state museum are good places to place the battle in the longer story of Nagaland itself.

At a glance

ETIQUETTE	Dress modestly, keep voices low, and do not treat the site as a backdrop.
CHECKED	Opening hours must be confirmed locally.



Photo: Ingo Mehling · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOW TO REACH

Kohima, Nagaland

AIRPORT	Dimapur Airport (DMU), roughly 70 km away.
RAILWAY	Dimapur Railway Station (DMV); Kohima has no railway.
BY ROAD	The cemetery is in the middle of Kohima town; about 2.5–3 hours by road from Dimapur.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and local cabs; walkable from some central hotels.

Confirm opening hours locally. Distances approximate - verify.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Natural Calendar: December

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

RESEARCHED · SAMPLE

Northern lights (northern Norway, Finland, Iceland, Canada): the dark months give the best chance, but sightings are not guaranteed. *Predictable season, uncertain nights.*

Amur falcons in Nagaland: these small raptors pass through Nagaland on a long migration, usually in October and November, and have become a conservation story in which local communities took a leading role. *By December most have moved on — read this as a preview for next year.*

Winter birds at Indian wetlands: many migratory species arrive for the cool season. *Predictable season; numbers vary with each year's conditions.*

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 12-Point Winter Travel Checklist

A one-page list you can save, print or share.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

1. **Passport and documents:** passport validity, visas or permits, printed and digital copies kept separately.

2. **Insurance:** check it covers medical care, cancellations and winter sports if relevant.

3. **Flexibility:** choose flights and stays that allow changes; winter weather disrupts schedules.

4. **Layers:** thermal base layer, mid-layer, windproof outer, warm hat, gloves.

5. **Footwear:** waterproof, with grip; break them in before the trip.

6. **Medication:** carry enough, in original packaging, with a doctor's letter if needed.

7. **Power:** cold drains batteries; carry a power bank and keep devices close to your body.

8. **Cash and cards:** carry a mix; tell your bank where you are going.

9. **Local rules:** check permits, opening hours and festival closures on official sites.

10. **Daylight:** winter days are short; plan outdoor activities for the middle of the day.

11. **Safety:** share your plans with someone at home; know the local emergency number.

12. **Respect:** learn a few words of the local language and the local customs before you go.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 24-Hour Destination: Kohima

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

ILLUSTRATIVE ITINERARY · VERIFY LOCALLY

Sunrise: a walk to a viewpoint above the town if the weather is clear.

Breakfast: a local tea and a simple breakfast near the main market.

Morning: the Kohima War Cemetery and the state museum, with time to read, not rush.

Lunch: a local restaurant serving Naga dishes; ask what each dish is.

Afternoon: the old Naga village of Kohima (Bara Basti) — with permission and a local guide where appropriate — and a stop at a craft stall.

Evening: the market, or, in December, the Night Bazaar.

Dinner: a home-style meal if your homestay offers it.

What to skip if short on time: extra museum stops; see the cemetery and one village viewpoint.

Costs and timings are placeholders to be filled from verified sources on production day.



Photo: Chainwit. · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOW TO REACH

Kohima, Nagaland

AIRPORT	Dimapur Airport (DMU), roughly 70 km away.
RAILWAY	Dimapur Railway Station (DMV); Kohima has no railway.
BY ROAD	The Dimapur–Kohima road takes about 2.5–3 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Local taxis and walking; ask your hotel for a driver for the day.

Timings approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

STAYS

Stay concept: a Naga village homestay

A feature concept, not a review. No property is endorsed here.

FEATURE CONCEPT · NO PROPERTY NAMED

The idea: profile one family-run homestay in a Naga village that has welcomed guests for several years — what the hosts offer, how guests are fitted into daily life, and what the income means for the household.

What we would verify before publication: the property, the hosts' consent, a price range with currency and date, and an official booking link. **Disclosure:** any hosted stay or commercial relationship would be stated clearly.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: komorebi

A Japanese word for a very particular kind of light.

LEXICON

Komorebi — pronounced roughly “koh-moh-reh-bee” — describes sunlight filtering through the leaves of trees. It is a word that suggests both the sight and the feeling of being in a forest.

It is commonly used in everyday and literary Japanese. Like many such words, it is hard to capture in a single English phrase, and it is best not to treat it as a symbol of an entire culture.

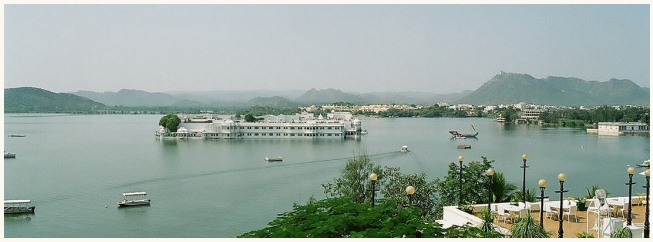


Photo: Uri Sittan Tripo · CC BY-SA 3.0

COMMUNITY

Travel Quiz — December

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

QUIZ

1. The Hornbill Festival takes place in which Indian state?

2. Which Norwegian city is a popular base for seeing the northern lights?

3. In which French region is the city of Strasbourg?

4. Which mountain overlooks Cape Town?

5. Which Indian state has the Great Rann of Kutch?

Answers (for the editor's copy — reveal next issue): Nagaland · Tromsø · Alsace · Table Mountain · Gujarat.

COMMUNITY

Your turn: the festival you still remember

Reader engagement idea for the next issue.

READER INVITATION

Tell us about a festival you have attended: 150 words and one photograph you took. Tell us where, when, and one moment you would not swap. A selection will appear in January's Readers' Pages with your name and photo credit — only with your permission.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Bookshelf

Three books we would pack.

RECOMMENDED READING

In Patagonia by Bruce Chatwin — a classic of modern travel writing, built from short, sharp episodes. Read it for the voice.

A Time of Gifts by Patrick Leigh Fermor — a young man's walk across Europe in the 1930s, remembered decades later. Read it for the prose and the sense of place.

Shadow of the Silk Road by Colin Thubron — a journey from China to the Mediterranean, full of conversation and observation. Read it for the people.



Photo: Vyacheslav Argenberg · CC BY 4.0



Photo: Vyacheslav Argenberg · CC BY 4.0



Photo: Diego Delso · CC BY-SA 3.0

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
Hornbill Festival	Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, near Kohima	1–10 December (fixed every year)	Nagaland's flagship celebration brings sixteen Naga tribes together for dance, folk songs, warrior displays, handicrafts and food stalls, with an evening rock festival..
Losoong (Namsoong)	Gangtok, Rumtek and monasteries across Sikkim	About mid-December 2026 (Tibetan calendar — confirm closer to the time)	The Sikkimese harvest new year, with masked Cham dances at monasteries, archery contests and family feasts.
Sunburn Festival	Goa	Usually the last week of December (confirm on the official site)	Asia's best-known electronic music festival draws international DJs and large crowds to Goa at the height of the winter season, with several stages and late-night after-parties..
Christmas in Goa	Old Goa, Panaji and village churches	24–25 December (fixed every year)	Midnight Mass in whitewashed churches, star lanterns, carol singing and bebinca desserts make a warm Christmas.
Cochin Carnival	Fort Kochi, Kerala	About 23 December to 1 January (fixed every year)	Fort Kochi hosts ten days of street parades, beach games, music and art, ending with the burning of a huge Papa Nani effigy at midnight on New Year's Eve..
Magh Bihu (Bhogali Bihu)	Upper Assam, especially around Tinsukia and Dibrugarh	13–15 January (fixed every year)	Assam's harvest feast.
Dehing Patkai Festival	Lekhapani, near Margherita, Tinsukia district	Usually mid-January for about three days (dates announced locally each year)	Held at the edge of the Dehing Patkai rainforest, this festival brings together tribal dances, handloom stalls, adventure activities and local cuisines, with the forest and coal-town heritage as a backdrop..
Torgya Festival	Tawang Monastery, Arunachal Pradesh	Usually January, 3 days around the Tibetan 11th month (lunar calendar — confirm closer to the time)	Monks in painted masks perform sacred dances inside Tawang Monastery's courtyard to drive away evil spirits and misfortune before the new year, set against snowy Himalayan surroundings..
Uttarayan International Kite Festival	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	About 14–15 January (fixed around Makar Sankranti)	Skies over Gujarat fill with thousands of kites as families race to the rooftops.
Jaipur Literature Festival	Diggi Palace, Jaipur	Usually the last week of January (confirm on the official site)	A free, crowded gathering of authors, thinkers and musicians in a heritage palace.
Monpa Losar	Tawang town and monasteries, Arunachal Pradesh	About 6–8 February 2027 (lunar calendar — confirm closer to the time)	The Monpa new year is marked with prayers at the monastery, new prayer flags, family feasts and masked dances.
Goa Carnival	Panaji, Margao and Vasco, Goa	About 6–9 February 2027 (before Lent, dates follow Easter)	Colourful floats, brass bands, masks and dancing take over Goan towns for four days, led by the mythical King Momo.
Dosmoche	Leh Palace and Likir/Diskit monasteries, Ladakh	About early to mid-February 2027 (Tibetan calendar — confirm closer to the time)	A winter ritual at Leh with masked dances and a symbolic procession to send away bad luck and welcome the new year.

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

Nyokum Yullo	Papum Pare and Ziro region, Arunachal Pradesh	About 26 February (fixed in the Nyishi calendar)	Nyishi communities pray for prosperity and good harvests with priest chants, community feasts and dances.

ASIA

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Dubai Shopping Festival	Dubai	Usually mid-December to late January (confirm on the official site)	Weeks of discounts, nightly fireworks, concerts and drone shows across Dubai's malls and creek-side promenades.
Thaipusam	Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur	About 22 January 2027 (lunar calendar — confirm closer to the time)	Devotees of Lord Murugan climb 272 steps to the cave temple carrying milk pots and ornate kavadi frames.
Harbin Ice and Snow Festival	Harbin, Heilongjiang	Usually early January to late February (conditions permitting)	Giant ice castles and snow sculptures glow with coloured lights in one of the coldest big cities on earth.
Lunar New Year (Tet)	Hanoi old quarter and flower streets	About 6 February 2027 (lunar calendar — confirm closer to the time)	Vietnam's biggest holiday fills Hanoi with peach blossom, kumquat trees and street fireworks.
Sapporo Snow Festival	Odori Park, Sapporo, Hokkaido	Usually early February, about a week	Huge snow and ice sculptures line Odori Park, lit up after dark, with food stalls selling hot ramen and grilled seafood.

EUROPE

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Edinburgh Hogmanay	Edinburgh, Scotland	About 29 December to 1 January (fixed every year)	A three-day winter party with a torchlight procession, street gatherings, live concerts and midnight fireworks above the castle.
Christmas markets	Vienna, Prague, Strasbourg, Cologne and across Europe	About late November to 23 December (fixed seasonal period; some run into January)	Wooden stalls sell mulled wine, roasted chestnuts and handmade gifts under lit-up cathedral squares.
Northern Lights season	Tromsø (Norway), Lapland (Finland) and Iceland	About September to March, with the best chances from December to February	Dark winter nights give the best chance to see green and violet auroras dancing in the sky.
Up Helly Aa	Lerwick, Shetland Islands	Last Tuesday of January — 26 January 2027	Hundreds of torch-bearing Vikings march through Lerwick before burning a full-size longship.
Venice Carnival	Venice, Italy	About late January to 9 February 2027 (ends the day before Lent)	Masked visitors in elaborate costumes drift through St Mark's Square and the canal-side lanes, with balls, parades and costume contests.

AFRICA & THE AMERICAS

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Cavadee	Tamil temples across Mauritius	About 22 January 2027 (lunar calendar — confirm closer to the time)	Mauritian Tamil devotees fast, then walk in processions to temples with decorated kavadi arches.
Rio Carnival	Sambadrome and street blocos, Rio de Janeiro	About 5–10 February 2027 (follows Easter; confirm closer to the time)	Samba schools compete under floodlights while neighbourhood street parties, called blocos, fill the beaches and squares.



Photo: Diego Delso · CC BY-SA 3.0

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

OCEANIA & INTERNATIONAL

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks	Sydney Harbour	31 December (fixed every year)	One of the world's most famous fireworks displays, launched from the Harbour Bridge and surrounding barges.

THE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Format example

Format example. Items are filled on production day from official sources, each with a link and a clear label: announced, or implemented.

[Airline or route announcement — source: operator press release, date]

[Visa or entry-rule change — source: official government site, date checked]

[Airport or rail development — source: operator or authority, date]

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Photo: chensiyuan · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Martin Falbisoner · CC BY-SA 4.0

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

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.

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