

Arunachal Pradesh Yatra

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I spent nearly three weeks in Arunachal Pradesh, drove over 3,000 kms starting from Deomali in the east to Tawang in the west the last stop being Gauhati. It was one of the most intense drives and yatras of my life. We covered touristy places, schools, war memorials and border visit.

This piece gives you the route that I took, places to see along the way plus links of pictures uploaded on esamskriti. Photo captions have travel tips etc.

Travel Route

I took a Mumbai-Kolkatta-Dibrugarh flight. If you book tickets in advance then get a cheap fare. INDIGO was bang on time – reliable as always.

From Dibrugarh took a Tata Sumo. It is about a 3-4 hour drive to Ramakrishna Mission School, Narrottamnagar in Deomali. From RKM it is about an 8 hour drive to Teju. Route was Deomali-Godumsa-Namsai-Chowkham-Wakro-Parasuram Kund-Tezu. We stopped by at Chowkham, Wakro and Parasramkund.

Tezu to Roing - there was a bridge being built over river in September 2013 when we went. If completed Tezu to Roing is about 2-3 hours. We had to take a longer route, took app 4 hours. From Roing Mayurdia is a 2 hour drive, can do a day trip. From Roing takes about 2 hours to reach the banks of the Brahmaputra – crossing the river takes one hour but might need to wait longer depending on boat availability. After crossing the river it is a 1.5 to 2 hour drive to Dibrugarh. We spent the night there.

Next morning drove about 45 minutes to reach place from where get boats to cross the river. It took an hour to cross. After that it about 7-8 hours drive to Along. It was 8am when we crossed river – reached Along at 6.30 pm. It included a one hour stop at Akashi Ganga and about 1.5 hours at Malinatthan.

From Malinatthan onwards enter hilly area. Along to Daporijio is a 5 to 6 hours drive. Next stop was Ziro i.e. about 5-6 hours drive. Ziro is a plateau at a height of about 5,000 feet – very beautiful. Ziro to Itanagar is about 6 hours drive.

We left Itanagar about 2.30pm to reach Bhalukpong by 7 ish. Next morning left at 5.30 am to reach Bomdila by 10.30 ish. Bomdila to Tawang is about 8 hours. The ambitious and fit can do Tawang to Tezpur in 12-13 hours. Tezpur to Gauhati is 3 hours.

Deomali

Visited the Ramakrishna Mission school there. To see pictures of school <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/RKM-Deomali.aspx>

About two hours drive is Khonsa, a beautiful paradise surrounded by thick forests and hilly terrain. Visitors can even go to the nearby tribal villages - Kheti and Lajo where the NOCTE and

WANCHO tribe live in a complete traditional style. The worth mentioning fact about these villages are that one can find human skulls hanging on the village dormitories. I skipped this.

Changlang

- Miao is popular in Changlang. Tibetan Refugee Settlement where colourful woolen carpets.
- *Stilwell* is a historic road, in the town of Jairampur in the Changlang District. It was created by Americans during the Second World War and joins India with the Chinese City of Kunming.
- *The World War II cemetery* is located at 25 km from town of Pangsau near the Indo-Myanmar Border and Stilwell Road. It is a burial ground for the soldiers who died in the world war second and most of the soldiers buried here are of Chinese, Kachins, Indian, British and American.
- *The Lake of No Return* is visible from Pangsau Pass and provides a soft landing for the fighter planes that were hit in the war by the enemy planes. As all the planes perished here, the place came to be called as the lake of No Return.

Deomali to Teju

We stopped at Golden Pakoda in Chowkham. To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Golden-Pagoda-Monestery.aspx>.

Next stop Wakro (Glow Lake+ dense forest and rich flora and fauna + famous for oranges). We were told the Lake is at a great height, about 1-2 day trek. We stopped at Parasuram Kund i.e. on the banks of river Lohit. Photo captions tell you about importance of place. To see <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Parasuram-Kund.aspx>

Tezu

- Visit Tibetan colony at Tezu.
- MISHI, SINGHPOS, KHAMPTI tribes said to have migrated from Thailand and Burma.
- District Museum and Craft centers are situated at the central place of Tezu township.
- At **Walong** one can enjoy the medicinal waters of the hot springs. There is a war memorial here built in memory of the officers and soldiers of the Indian army who laid down their lives fighting the Chinese army

To see pictures of Vivekanand Kendra School, Tezu <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/VKV-Tafragam.aspx>

At Roing

- Sally Lake and Handicraft centre.
- IDU MISHMI tribe.
- Bhismaknagar located in Dibang Valley district and is a sacred heritage of the Idu Mishmis. Bhismaknagar must have been a strong hold of the Chutiyas (12th-16th centuries) but the excavations has been throwing new light on its much earlier antiquities.
- Home of Rukmini Lord Krishna's wife at remains at Vismaknagar.

To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/VKV-Roing.aspx>. From Roing visit hill station Mayudia (very scenic), takes only two hours. To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Mayudia.aspx>

We crossed the Brahmaputra at Dibrugarh. To see pictures of crossing the river <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Crossing-Brahmaputra.aspx>

Malinatthan Temple Ruins

- According to the local tradition associated with the place, Lord Krishna carried away Rukmini the daughter of King Bhismaka on the eve of her marriage with Shishupal. Krishna and Rukmini were welcomed here by Parvati with garlands. Parvati thus acquired the name Malini and the place Malinithan. Ruins of a big temple belonging to 14/15th century. Sculptural masterpieces on granite.
- See ADI tribe for their colorful Ponung Dance.

To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Malinatthan-Temple.aspx>

Akashiganga: On the way to Along from Likabali, there exists a sacred place, about 25 km from the nearest railhead at Silapathar in Assam, hallowed as Akashiganga. The name Akashiganga is suggestive of a water channel in the hill. It is believed that the this place is associated with the legend narrated in the Kalika Purana (8th Century A.D.) that where the corpse of Sati (Parvati) was cut into pieces by Vishnu with his discus at the refusal of Siva to part away with it, her head fell somewhere near Akashiganga. To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Akashiganga.aspx>

Along

- The region is also famous for the works of bamboo and cane. Hats, cane vessels, hats, belts, bamboo mugs , carvings etc
- Patum Bridge is built over the Siyom or Yomgo River in Along. The 146 meter long cable bridge not only offers comfortable transport but is also a tourist attraction.
- Hanging Bridges: The Hanging Bridges are a local bridge built on the Siang River at Along. They are made of cane and bamboo.
- *Mechuka 8 hour drive:* Nestled in the Eastern Himalayas, Mechuka, the forbidden valley of Arunachal Pradesh is blessed with stunning beauty of blue hills, rivers and lush green forests. Is the home to the people of the MEMBA tribe who are mostly believers of Buddhism. The prime attraction of Mechuka is an ancient Buddhist Monastery called Samten Yongcha of Mehayana sect. This 400 year old monastery is perched at a hilltop in the western part of Mechuka valley. This gompa or monastery is contemporary to the great Tawang monastery in the state. Mechuka is also embellished with numerous ancient statues. It is said that around five centuries ago, Guru Nanak visited Mechuka and has done meditation at the origin of the river Yomgo.
- **Donyi Polo Temple:** Lying around 3km from Pasighat, this sun and moon centre for worship was started by Talom Rukbo. It was started in the year 1989 and has organized many rallies and processions.

To see pictures of Ramakrishna Mission School, Along <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/RKM-Along.aspx>

Daporjio

- Home to TAGIN and MIRI tribes.
- Suspension bridges over Subansiri River made from bamboo, cane.
- Sigem-Daporjio n Kamala Reserve forest with its rich fauna diversity good.

- Subansiri River is also ideal for river rafting, angling and picnic.
- Museum and Craft Centre are other places which could hold your interest.

To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Daporijo.aspx>

Ziro (must see)

- Rice bowl by terrace farming.
- Sunrise a must from hill top.
- APATANI tribal home visit, worship Donyi-Polo, FACIAL tattoos, Nose plugs.
- Hong Apatani village where terraced paddy fields bordering pine forest + Locals are proud of *Lapang* platforms + fields where a unique system of poly culture and water management of the Apatanis.
- Apatani village consists of long rows of house with a totem in front for cooking. Weaving skills super – JIKHE pattern woven jackets and JILANG shawls. Men in Metallurgy and Bamboo craft.
- SHIVLING - Shiva Lingam at Kardo Forest. There is a 25 ft tall and 22 ft wide Shiva lingam in Kardo forest which is located 4 kms from Hapoli town.
- Tarin is high altitude fish farm.
- *Pine Groove*- at a distance of 3 kms from old Ziro
- *Kile Pakho* located 7 kms from old Ziro. It offers a bird's eye view of the Ziro valley and the snow clad Himalayas.
- *Midey* is a place which is famous for gigantic blue pine trees and is located 2 kms from old Ziro.
- Craft Centre not as impressive as the one in Along.

To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Ziro-Valley.aspx>. To see pictures of Shiva Lingam at Ziro <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Shiva-Lingam-Ziro.aspx>

Itanagar

- Pandit Nehru State Museum Monday closed 10 am to 4pm.
- Ita Fort includes collection of art, craft, textiles, jewellery Tue-Sun 10am to 5pm.
- APONG rice beer.
- NYISHI tribals who live around – massie knot hair rolled into a bun over their forehead. In their headdress they wear feathers of the great hornbill.
- Craft Emporium.
- **Itafort** 'The fort of bricks' from which the State capital derives its name, is situated in the heart of the capital complex. The fort has an irregular shape, built mainly with bricks dating back to the 14th-15th Century. The total brickwork is of 16,200 cubic metre lengths which have been identified by some scholars with Mayapur of Ramachandra, a king of the Jitari Dynasty.
- **Gekar Sinyi (Ganga Lake)** A very beautiful natural lake surrounded by landmass of hard rock. The name Gekar Sinyi means 'confined water' is 6 kms away.
- Old town is Naharlagun. Old palace and traces of ancient capital identified with Mayapur of the Jitri dynasty of the 11th century.

To see pictures of

1. Ramakrishna Mission Hospital Itanagar <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Ramakrishna-Mission-Hospital-Itanagar.aspx>

2. Tribes of Arunachal including Tribal Museum Itanagar
<http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Tribes-of-Arunachal-Pradesh.aspx>

Bhalukpong

- Famous for archaeological ruins of King Bhaluka who was the grandfather of King Bana of Mahabharata fame, an ancient ruler of the region. A historical fort of 10th-12th Century AD is situated in the foothills of the region, one can see remains. Some important remains of King Bhaluk's capital and his grandson Bana are preserved here.
- 7 kms from here is TIPI – flora glass house where 500 species of Orchids can be seen.
- Sessa has natural orchid sanctuary.

Bomdila (spend 2-3 hours walking around)

- Apple orchards.
- Buddhist Stupa.
- Gompas.
- Craft centre hand woven carpets by local MONPA tribe skilled weavers, traders and make hand-crafted paper.
- SHERDUKPEN tribe known for folk dances i.e. Yak dance, Deer dance, Ajilhamu and Eagle dance.
- Views of Mount Kangto and Mt Gorichen (highest peak in state).

To see pictures of Drive to Tawang <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Drive-to-Tawang.aspx>

Dirang (stay here instead of Bomdila, not as cold and cheaper hotels)

- Hot water springs.
- Kalachakra Gumpa.
- Apple orchards.

Sela Pass (superb, very cold)

It is 45 kms from Dirang on the way to Tawang. Sela Pass is the world's second highest motorable pass at an altitude of 14000 ft. The serene crystal blue water natural lake and the surrounding landscape is truly pleasing to the eyes and senses. To see pictures of Sela Pass <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Sela-Pass.aspx>

Nurannang: It is 12 kms from Sela Pass and is famous for cold water snow and rainbow trout fish hatchery.

Jaswant Garh War Memorial

Located at a distance of 4 kms from Nuranang, Jaswant Garh is a memorial erected in the memory of Veer Jaswant Singh of the 4th Garhwal Rifles and a recipient of Mahavir Chakra (Posthumous). To see pictures <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/JaswantGarh-War-Memorial.aspx>

Tawang

- Drive through Alpines.
- The natural beauty n solitude of Gudpi/Chong-Chugmi ranges, Tawang chu River/ Tawang valley are very mesmerizing.
- Tawang War Memorial.
- 400 year old Monastery of the Mahayana (Gelugpa) sect. Has old scriptures, images, books and collection of gold lettered Buddhist scriptures + 8 metre high gilded image of the Buddha in main prayer hall + Great Rotating Prayer wheels + Assembly Hall + Library + School for Monks + Community kitchen + Museum + Tangkhas Paintings + Ritual vessels + possessions of the 6th Dalai Lama.
- Urgelling Monastery i.e. associated with the birth of the 6th Dalai Lama.
- Craft Centre sells beautiful Masks, Hand woven carpets, Jewellery in silver, local dress, turquoise, coral and amber.
- Taktsang Monastery 45 kms from Tawang known as Tiger's Den. Guru Padmasambhava is supposed to have visited in the 8th century.
- Sangetsar Lake/ PTso Lake for its picturesque landscape.
- Ani Gompa is 12 kms from Tawang is close to lake.
- Bumla Border you need to get permission.

To see pictures of Bumla Border <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Bumla-Border.aspx> and Tawang War Memorial <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Tawang-War-Memorial.aspx>

Tawang Monastery which is an important seat of Mahayana Buddhism is located here. This world famous monastery of the Gelukpa was founded during the 17th century by Mera Lama Lodre Gyaltsso who is considered as a contemporary of the 5th Dalai Lama. It is Asia's second largest monastery and India's largest which controls 17 Gompas in the region. The highlights of this monastery are the imposing three-storied assembly hall and the 28 ft high golden statue of Lord Buddha. There is also a big library which has an impressive collection of ancient books and manuscripts. The famous Buddhist gold inscribed scriptures Kangyur and Tangyur are preserved here. Also see Urgyelling Monastery, the birth place of Thangyang Gyastso, the 6th Dalai Lama.

To see pictures of Tawang Monastery <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Tawang-Monastery.aspx>. To see pictures of Craft Centres of Arunachal Pradesh <http://www.esamskriti.com/photo-detail/Craft-Centres-Arunachal-Pradesh.aspx>

In Arunachal worship Surya and Moon together. Visit Donyi Polo in Along, Itanagar. Arunachal has 5 rivers – Lohit, Tirap, Siang, Kaming and Subanshree. Buddhists found in 2 places – Monpa in West and Khampti in East.

Details of what to see, monasteries taken from various sites and booklets. Humble thank you to them.

In your life visit Arunachal Pradesh once. It is very scenic and lovely people. Plus point they speak Hindi and you get dal, chapatti, rice, veggies etc.

The author is a travel photojournalist and founder www.esamskriti.com