

Shillong, India



Shillong tops on every hill-lover's bucket list

Hailed as the 'Scotland of the East', Shillong is located at an altitude of 4,908 feet above sea level. This capital city of Meghalaya is one of the cleanest destinations with wooden-floored houses, winding roads, and mystic woodlands. Shillong has numerous attractions both within and outside the city, which put it on every hill-lover's bucket list.

Places to Visit in Shillong

Mawlynnong Village: Awarded the 'cleanest' village in Asia, Mawlynnong has a host of natural attractions: walking trails, living root-bridges, the balancing rock, and some stupendous waterfalls. The 90-km journey from Shillong to Mawlynnong affords some great views of the neighboring Bangladesh and the Sohra Plateau.

Umiam Lake: Often compared to the lochs in Scotland, the Umiam Lake is some distance away from Shillong. If someone loves to sit by a placid lake, undisturbed by tourists, the Umiam Lake is the place to be.

Elephant Falls: The 'Elephant Falls' was so named because of an elephant-shaped rock near the falls. The rock was destroyed in an earthquake long ago, but the name still persists. The water cascades in three steps. The most majestic of them is the third fall. The sloshing sound of the water reverberates long after you have visited the place.

Shillong Peak or Shillong Viewpoint: While visiting Shillong, it is always a good idea to drive to the highest point in the area. The views of knolls and dales are breathtaking and the air here is noticeably refreshing.

Golf Link: This is the first 18-hole golf course in India. With an occasional pine tree here and there, the golf course looks like one massive green carpet gently rolling over sloping mounds. A colonial-era golf house draws a lot of first-time visitors.

Ward's Lake: Within a walking distance from the golf course lies this lovely lake with an ornamental bridge, boating facilities, and paddling geese.

Laitlum Canyons: The beautiful gorges of Laitlum are an absolute must-visit. The canyons are a 45-minute drive from the main city. It offers stunning views of the Rasong village below.

All Saints Church: Now called the All Saints Cathedral, this building is more than a hundred years old. Not only do local Christians flock to this church for their daily worship, but tourists visit it in droves on account of its history and architecture.

Lady Hydari Park: This Japanese-style park has ponds generously spread out. The Park also has a mini-zoo and at any time of the year, several enthusiastic children will be found peering at the sloth bear within bars. It also has a museum where you can see a python skin, a stuffed leopard, elephant skulls, and photos of rare animals.

Police Bazaar: This is the commercial heart of Shillong. Some shops here have achieved an iconic stature like the

Delhi Misthan Bhandar, which sells Jalebis (crispy pretzels soaked in sugar syrup). Vendors sell dumplings, boiled eggs, and corn on the cob at busy street intersections. Somehow, snacking seems lot more fun in the cold weather of Shillong.

Other places near Shillong that are worth a visit are Mawsynram, Cherrapunjee (also Cherrapunji) and Dawki. Cherrapunjee was the wettest place on earth, but that title has now been taken away by Mawsynram. Dawki lies on the Meghalaya-Bangladesh border. It is rocky and hot, but the temptation of setting foot on a foreign land lures many visitors to Dawki.

Things to Do in Shillong

Trekking – The top of Laitlum Canyons is great for a picnic. Hard-core trekkers, however, should not miss the opportunity to trek to the village below. It is always alluring. The terrain is not snowy, but it is sturdy like the Himalayas. What fuels your inner urge to go trekking is the possibility of spotting rare animals.

Major Events and Festivals –Whenever you are in Shillong, you will find yourself in the midst of festivals. Flower festival in summer and the Bob Dylan Festival on 24 May are quite a draw for the travelers. Annual Pilgrimage to Lum Sohpetbneng and Food Festival also have significant number of patrons.

Accommodation

Pine Suites Hotel, Hotel Knight Inn, and Shillong Club Guesthouse are preferred retreats among the budget travelers. Hotel Centre Point and Hotel Alpine Continental are renowned mid-range hotels in Shillong. Hotel Polo Towers is the only 4-star hotel in the town.

Restaurants

The local cuisine of Shillong is dominated by pork, chicken, and fish. Restaurants such as Ginger and Sky Grill, Kenmore, and Sip & Dine offer fine dining experience. While Little Chef Cafe serves great food at reasonable prices, the Sesame is known for its Southeast Asian cuisine and traditional tribal dishes.

Where is Shillong?

Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, is 129 km away from Guwahati. It is the headquarters of the East Khasi Hills district.

Best Time to Visit Shillong

Summer temperatures here range from 60° F to 75° F and winter temperatures can go as low as 40° F. Shillong receives sufficient rainfall. However, since the town is hilly and the roads are well-maintained, water drains quickly. After a bout of rain, the roads look cleaner and the atmosphere fresher. The waterfalls look very beautiful during monsoon. The fog-wrapped hills are an inviting sight.

How to Reach?

By Air –The closest airport is Shillong Airport (also known as Umroi Airport). It is located around 27 km from the main city. Passenger and charter flights fly to the airport from Kolkata and Guwahati. Another airport is the Gopinath Bordoloi Airport at Guwahati. From there, visitors rent a cab and travel to Shillong. You do not get only cabs on hire and a driver needs to be hired, too. So the cost of a driver is factored in car rental prices.

By Road –Meghalaya has no rail lines. So, visitors can arrive by rail at Guwahati. From there, cabs can be hired to go to Shillong. Shared cabs that ply between the two cities are high on demand. Several buses also ply from the Guwahati railway station to Shillong. The town is about a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Guwahati, the biggest city in northeast India.

Facts about Shillong

Mawlynnong was awarded the 'cleanest village' by Discover India in 2005.

The Golf Links in Shillong is India's first 18-hole golf course.

Shillong's Entomological Museum is the only known museum in India dedicated to moths and butterflies.

Shillong stands at an altitude of 4,908 feet.

Shillong Peak is the highest point in Shillong.

Lady Hydari Park gets its name from the first lady of Assam (wife of the Governor of Assam) since Shillong, during the British rule, was within Assam.

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