

WEST BENGAL | SIKKIM | NORTH EAST | ANDAMAN | BHUTAN



DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Travel Partners,

February carries a quiet sense of purpose. It's a pause before spring's full expression—a time that encourages thoughtful travel, where experiences are chosen for their cultural depth, community connection, and enduring meaning rather than sheer pace.

From the subtle grace of Basanta Utsav in Santiniketan to the serene, community-centric rhythm of life in Aizawl amid the Mizo Hills, Eastern and Northeast India continue to reveal journeys where tradition is not performed, but lived.

The region's rising prominence was further highlighted at the ICC Tourism & Hospitality Conclave in Siliguri, which brought together industry leaders and policymakers to discuss sustainable growth, infrastructure preparedness, and responsible destination development.

As we look ahead to engaging with the larger travel ecosystem at SATTE, this edition is guided by a simple conviction—when culture shapes the journey, travel delivers lasting value for both destinations and travelers.

With Best Regards,
Amit Periwai
Director

West Bengal: India's Fast-Rising International Gateway

West Bengal continues to emerge as one of India's leading gateways for international travellers, recording over 3 million foreign arrivals last year and a 15% year-on-year growth—surpassing several traditional destinations across the country.

For partners focused on East and Northeast India, Clubside Tours & Travels brings over four decades of regional expertise, offering seamless, culture-led journeys across Kolkata, West Bengal, and beyond.



Meet us at SATTE 2026

Stand: A40 | Hall: 1

Venue: Yashbhoomi, Dwarka, Delhi

Dates: 25–27 February 2026

Make West Bengal a core part of your itineraries—with Clubside Tours & Travels as your trusted partner.

FESTIVAL WATCH: CULTURE IN FULL BLOOM

BASANTA UTSAV

Santiniketan's Springtime Cultural Festival (March)

As spring arrives in Santiniketan, Basanta Utsav is celebrated as an elegant cultural festival welcoming the season of renewal and creativity. Rooted in the vision of Rabindranath Tagore, the festival blends music, dance, poetry, and visual harmony, offering a refined and artistic alternative to the exuberance of Holi.

The peaceful town of Santiniketan, home to Visva-Bharati University, transforms into a vibrant open-air cultural stage. Students, faculty, artists, and visitors come together dressed in shades of yellow and white, as the air fills with Rabindra Sangeet, graceful dance performances, and the gentle application of abir. The festival reflects a deep connection between nature, art, and human expression, making it one of West Bengal's most prestigious cultural celebrations.



BASANTA UTSAV 2026: DATE & VENUE

Date: Wednesday, 4 March 2026

Venue: Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan

Alongside the main celebrations, nearby areas such as Sonajhuri Haat and Kankalitala host independent festivities that preserve the festival's rustic, artistic, and community-driven spirit.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Early March is ideal to experience Basanta Utsav in full bloom. The broader season from February to March offers pleasant weather, cultural vibrancy, and comfortable travel conditions.

NEARBY PLACES TO EXPLORE



- Sonajhuri Haat & Khoai – Red soil landscapes, handicrafts, and folk culture.
- Amar Kutir – Tagore's cooperative legacy through local crafts.
- Kankalitala Temple – A serene spiritual site near Santiniketan.
- Gitanjali Rail Museum – Insight into Tagore's life and travels.



Route Program



Day 01

Arrival in Santiniketan – Evening visit to Sonajhuri Haat.



Day 02

Attend Basanta Utsav celebrations at Visva-Bharati University.



Day 03

Explore Khoai (Sonajhuri forest), Amar Kutir, and local cultural spaces.



Day 04

Visit Kankalitala / Gitanjali Rail Museum – Departure.

Local Food Experience

Savor Santiniketan's simple yet soulful flavors — enjoy pitha, rosogolla, and light vegetarian meals inspired by Baul traditions. Eating local keeps you energized while staying connected to the region's earthy culinary heritage.



DESTINATION DECODE: THIS MONTH'S HIDDEN GEM

AIZAWL

Cultural Capital of the Mizo Hills

Tucked away in the eastern Himalayan ranges, Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, is one of Northeast India's most serene and culturally distinctive destinations. Surrounded by rolling hills, bamboo forests, and misty valleys, the city offers a peaceful environment shaped by nature, tradition, and a strong community-based lifestyle.

Aizawl reflects Mizo identity through its hilltop settlements, local markets, and churches that form the core of everyday life. With a landscape defined by the Lushai Hills, the city enjoys a pleasant hill climate and scenic surroundings that make it ideal for slow and meaningful travel.



The People & Culture

Aizawl is home to the Mizo community, known for their deep-rooted traditions, agricultural heritage, and strong sense of unity. Cultural festivals such as Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut, and Pawl Kut celebrate harvest cycles through folk dances, music, and community gatherings. These traditions highlight the close relationship between the people, their land, and their way of life..



Best Time to Visit

Between October and March, when the weather is pleasant and ideal for sightseeing, nature walks, and cultural experiences.



Suggested Route



Day 01

Arrival in Aizawl – Evening visit to Bara Bazar.



Day 02

Aizawl – Visit Reiek Mountain and Zokhua, a traditional Mizo village.



Day 03

Aizawl – Visit Hmuifang Village and Sialsuk Village; excursion to Tuirhiau Falls and Vantawng Falls.



Day 04

Aizawl – Fly out

Aizawl at a Glance

Calm yet culturally rich, Aizawl offers a distinctive travel experience rooted in community, tradition, and nature. Set amidst the hills of Mizoram, it is a destination where culture thrives quietly and life moves at a gentle, unhurried pace.

Sikkim Inner Line Permit (ILP / RAP / PAP): Updated Online Process

The Sikkim Inner Line Permit (ILP)—also referred to as the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) / Protected Area Permit (PAP)—has now shifted to a fully online application system through the FRRO portal.

Application Process

- Applicants must visit the FRRO website and create a login using only an email ID.
- Do not enter a mobile number while creating the login, as OTP verification is sent only via email.
- After successful login, applicants must carefully fill in all required personal, passport, visa, and travel details as per the prescribed format.
- All information must exactly match passport and visa records to avoid rejection or delay.
- The FRRO website can be accessed only within India. Guests are required to be physically present in India to submit their application.

Mandatory Documents to Upload

Applicants must upload clear, legible scanned copies of the following:

- Request letter stating the purpose and justification of the visit to Sikkim.
- Recent passport-size photograph.
- Passport bio page.
- Valid Indian visa page.
- Indian arrival stamp page.
- Proof of residence in Sikkim (hotel voucher / confirmed accommodation booking is acceptable).

Permit Validity & Conditions

- The permit is generally issued for a specific duration and specific locations only.
- Travel is allowed only to approved districts / protected areas mentioned in the permit.
- Extension of permit, if required, is subject to local authority approval.
- Carry a printed copy of the permit at all times during travel in Sikkim.

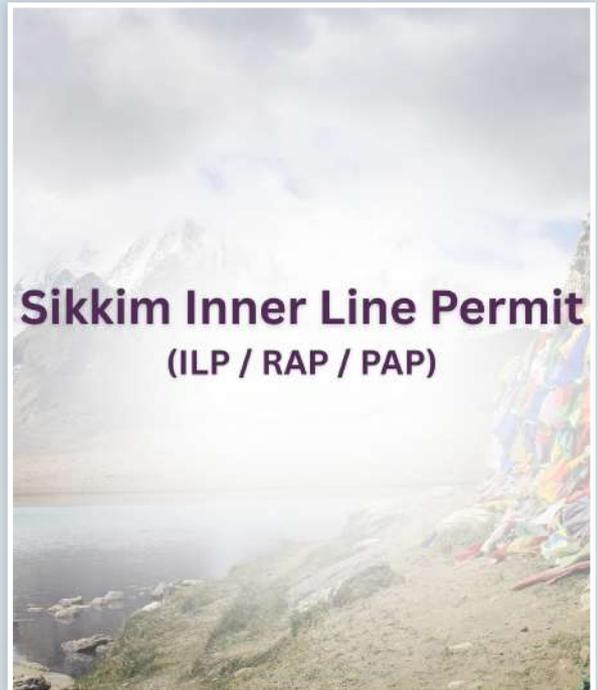
Special Clearance Requirement

Special approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) or Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is mandatory for:

- Diplomatic / Official passport holders.
- Citizens of China, Taiwan, Pakistan, Myanmar, Hong Kong, Macau, Nigeria, and Afghanistan.
- Travelers born in the above countries.
- Travelers who have visited any of these countries in the last 90 days.

Applications falling under special clearance categories may take additional processing time.

*For any clarification in the process please reach out to us.



Fees

- Permit fees are applicable as per government norms.
- The final fee amount is subject to confirmation by the issuing authority at the time of application.
- Fees once paid are non-refundable, even if the permit is rejected.

Important Notes

- Submission of an application does not guarantee approval.
- Incomplete or incorrect information may lead to rejection or delay.
- Travelers are advised to apply well in advance of their travel dates.
- Local police or authorities may conduct verification checks during the stay.

ON THE GROUND: SECTOR-WISE TRAVEL BUZZ



Hotel IORA Shillong – Comfort in the Heart of the Hills

Nestled in the serene Golflinks area, Hotel Iora offers spacious stays just steps from Polo Ground and minutes from Police Bazaar, with great dining and event-ready spaces.



Heritage Market at Ward's Lake

Set beside the iconic Ward's Lake (also known as Pollock Lake or Nan Polok), this charming heritage market is centrally located near Police Bazaar and Camel Back Road, offering an easy-to-visit cultural stop with a nominal entry fee.



DHR Launches 'Jungle Safari' Train to Boost Tourism

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway has introduced the 34-km 'Jungle Safari' passenger service between Siliguri and Gayabari, offering a scenic forest journey that enhances tourism on this UNESCO World Heritage route.



A New Icon Rises in Kolkata

Rooted in Bengal's rich heritage, OZEN MANSION KOLKATA reimagines timeless elegance with bespoke, world-class hospitality.



Passenger User Charges Introduced at Darranga Land Port

Effective 1 January 2026, the Land Ports Authority of India has implemented Passenger User Charges at Darranga Land Port for all incoming and outgoing passengers, applicable to Indian, Bhutanese, and foreign nationals.

NATIONAL TOURISM AWARDS



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