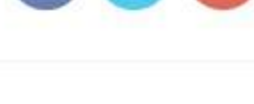


Best activities for a family holiday in Meghalaya

by Ami Bhat (Lonely Planet Author) Jul 2017



Shillong at sunset
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

As we drove into the swirling clouds that appeared out of no-where, our visibility dipped to less than 300 meters. I panicked and checked with our driver on whether we should stop till it cleared, but he just smiled and said – “relax, this is normal for we are in the ‘Abode of Clouds’”.

Meghalaya turned out to be a beautiful and unpredictable destination – with its pristine surroundings, lush green valleys and interesting nature trails. It is an ideal family holiday – it was a treat for me, a relaxing holiday for my overworked husband and a novel experience for my 10 year old. Here are my top picks for a family vacation in Meghalaya.

Also read: A day at the cleanest village in Asia: Mawlynnong, Meghalaya

Parks of Shillong



Lady Hydari Park also has a mini-zoo
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

With its unhurried pace of life and friendly people, well-maintained parks and the 80s music that blares out of restaurants and taxis, Shillong is charming. A walk in Wards Lake, with its British styled landscaping is a perfect way to start your day. The Lady Hydari Park also has a mini zoo with butterflies fluttering on the rare orchids here.

Shillong Golf Course



Shillong Golf Course has a scenic setting
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

A visit to the Shillong Golf Course is like going to the highlands of Scotland. You can see a huge expanse of green dotted by not just golfers, but by families, couples and friends spending time together and with local kids trying some acrobatics in the golf pits. You can even fly a kite.

Discover the Indigenous tribes of North East

The Don Bosco Center for Indigenous Cultures way is the perfect place to learn about the elusive tribes of North East and their colourful lives. From their culture and traditions to their food and festivals – everything is well documented and represented here. Do not miss the skywalk that gives you a beautiful birds-eye view of Shillong.

Street Shopping at Police Bazaar in Shillong

Whether you are a shopaholic or not, a visit to the Police Bazaar in Shillong is a must, just for its lively atmosphere. From footwear to woollen wear, from home decor items to local fruits, a walk down this street is quite fascinating. Remember to bargain hard for your wares.

Waterfall chasing at Sohra



The Nohkalkai Falls are dramatic during the monsoon season.
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

Though the waterfall chasing in Meghalaya starts in Shillong itself with its stunning Elephant falls, it is the journey to Sohra that accelerates it. With her head poking out of the car window, my daughter could not stop gasping at every cascade that we crossed. Don't miss the stunning Nohkalkai falls that plummet down to a large boulder or the Seven-Sisters falls that flow parallel to each other. Take your kids to the Wha Khaba falls where you get to walk on those wet stones of the streams that converge into a mighty waterfall.

Caving in Sohra



Caving is a popular activity in Meghalaya
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

Crouching along narrow passages and squeezing through crevices in torchlight with just the sound of streams entertaining you can be quite an adventure for adults and kids. While there are several caves that you can visit in Meghalaya, my personal favourites are the Anwai Caves and the Mawmai caves in Cherrapunji or Sohra. My daughter was thrilled to crawl through the dark spaces as water dripped over her face. She also spotted numerous fossils along the cave walls.

Hiking to the Living Root Bridges



The unique Living Root Bridge
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

One of the most unmissable things in Meghalaya is its unique Living Root Bridges, a bio-engineering feat that few other places in the world can boast of. Made out of live, growing roots of the rubber tree, this bridge is not built but grown to make a sturdy crossing over streams and rivers. It is so strong that it can hold up to 50 people at a time. It is a lovely hike for adventurous families – especially if you opt to see the double decker Umshiang root bridge in Cherrapunji also. You can even visit the Living Root Bridge in Mawlynnong, especially if you are traveling with younger kids.

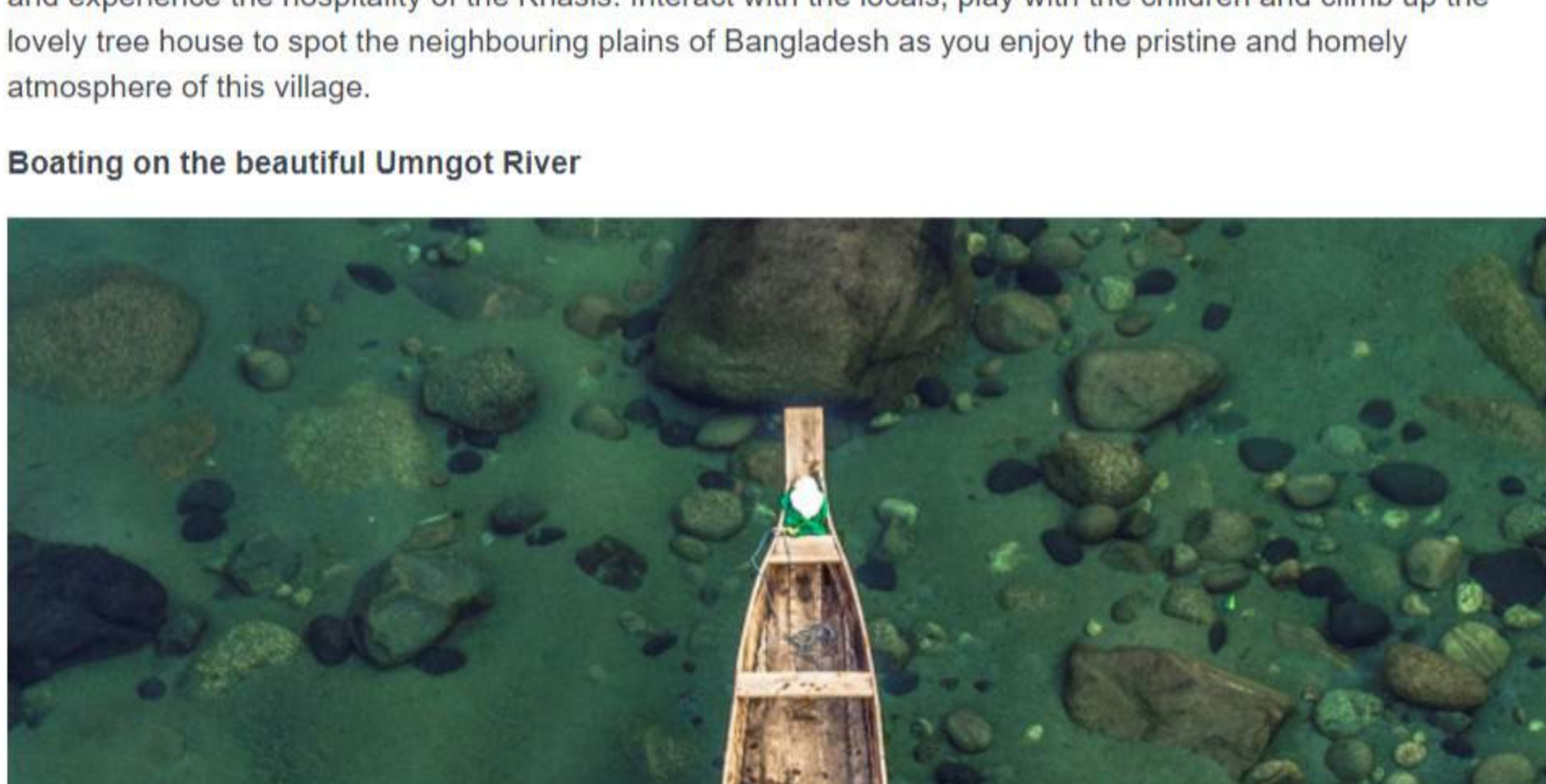
A night at the cleanest village in Asia



The pretty village of Mawlynnong
Image courtesy: Supriya Sehgal

Visiting Mawlynnong, the cleanest village in Asia, is not enough. You need to spend a night here in home-stays and experience the hospitality of the Khasis. Interact with the locals, play with the children and climb up the lovely tree house to spot the neighbouring plains of Bangladesh as you enjoy the pristine and homely atmosphere of this village.

Boating on the beautiful Umngot River



A boat ride on Umngot River is a must
Image courtesy: Meghalaya Tourism Board

Head to the border of India and Bangladesh to not just see the end point but experience a gorgeous boat ride along the Umngot River. If you happen to go on a clear day, you will feel as if you are floating on an invisible river or a sheet of glass because the water is crystal clear. Do stop by at the island full of colorful pebbles – something that reminds you of the eggs of the Roc from tales of Sindbad the Sailor.

I highly recommend at least a 5-day stay in Meghalaya where you can cover Shillong, Cherrapunji and Mawlynnong. Besides Shillong, all the other destinations are not easy to book online and one must try contacting local home-stays for bookings.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Ami Bhat is senior marketing professional, currently on a break to pursue full-time travel blogging. A travel enthusiast, who loves sports, photography and dancing with equal passion, Ami believes in planning a short escape for every long weekend that can come up through the year. And when she cannot travel physically, she travels virtually through words on her travel. More on: www.thrillingtravel.in



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