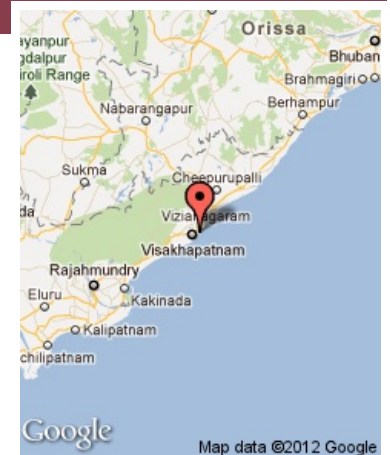


Tribal Trail in Eastern India



Highlights

The **advivasi** ('old inhabitants') are the diverse aboriginal communities of India, with a cultural history spanning over 30,000 years. This 13-day tour takes you to the mountains, jungles and beaches of eastern India to discover the past and present of these ancient tribes of India!

The east Indian states of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh are among the least spoilt and most enigmatic in the subcontinent, boasting vast expanses of jungle and grasslands, an incredible diversity of flora and fauna and some of the oldest temples in India. There are mountains, lakes and mile upon mile of glorious coastline, not to mention the vibrant cities of Bhubaneswar, with its 3,000 year history, and Hyderabad, India's answer to Silicon Valley (as if that were a question!). More intriguing though are the states' tribal cultures; nomads, hunters and horticulturalists number into the millions, with hundreds of distinct groups and an extraordinary diversity of customs and rituals dating back many millennia.

This 13-day tour is a true voyage of discovery! Starting from the pretty port town of Vizag, home to India's second largest ship graveyard, you'll head by train into the forested hills of the Eastern Ghats, where tribal communities inhabit the lush river valleys. Explore the cave temples, sacred mountains and ancient shrines that abound here, then drop into a tribal market and marvel at the multitude of beads, earrings and hairpins being worn and sold! You'll chill out on Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish lagoon and a haven for migratory birds and playful dolphins, then it's on to the awesome temples of Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where "the language of stone surpasses the language of man". A magical end to magical trip!

Is it for me?

This is a breathtaking, mind-expanding adventure, a feast of the new, unusual and spectacular! Needless to say, if you like your holidays to be neatly planned and without surprises you'll probably loathe this trip. There's nothing cosy and conventional here, just an endless stream of jaw-dropping spectacle! Even the transport is an adventure in itself, with everything from ferry to rickshaw, pole boat to bullock cart called upon! This tour is for anyone with a taste, nay, a hunger for adventure and a wide-open mind. You'll get most from his tour if you're not afraid to try new things and even look silly in the process. And given the amount of socialising you'll be doing (with others travellers, villagers and so on), it helps if you're pretty personable and outgoing.

Accommodation

For this tour you'll be spending seven nights in hotels and guesthouses, four nights camping out and one night on a sleeper train as it winds its way through the dense jungle! All the hotels are clean and comfortable, while the tents are secure, spacious and suitably characterful. On the food front you won't be disappointed. Given Andhra and Orissa's respective latitudes, you'll find the local cuisine a blend of north and south Indian cuisine with plenty of fresh produce straight from the fields. You're guaranteed some terrific seafood along the coast. Look out also for sweets like rasgulla and chhenapodapitha in Orissa and Andhra specialties like pesarattu (crispy pancake with onions and chilies) and pachadi (chutney with vegetables and roasted chili).

Itinerary

Days 1 - 2: Visakhapatnam (Vizag)

The picturesque port city of Visakhapatnam in the state of Andhra Pradesh, surrounded inland by shrine-crested

Prices from

734 GBP (13 days) per person

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hills and on the coast by a natural harbour, comes as a pleasant surprise. Friendly smiles, fiery curries and hilarious filmy placards dot the city. Explore India's second largest ship graveyard, rub shoulders with pilgrims at the 11th century Simachalam temple and sip coconut juice on the beach.

Day 3: Jeypore

Traversing spectacular scenery your train winds around the hills of the Eastern Ghats separating Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Passing through forested hills, across rivers and lush valleys into the tribal territory of Orissa.

Day 4: Gupteshwar

Today you'll ascend the limestone hill of Gupteshwar and enter the sacred cave temple of Hindu God Shiva, 'Lord of Destruction'. Enjoy a hilltop picnic lunch, then walk ancient tracks through dense forest and meet the inhabitants of the archaic supercontinent Gondwanaland. Drop into a local weekly market, pick up fresh produce and cook over a slow fire.

Day 5: Lamtaput

Join India's oldest indigenous peoples, shop for provisions and let the most extraordinary and ordinary confound you. Be dazzled by the kaleidoscope of beads worn by traditional Bonda tribeswomen, then follow the footsteps of the Gaddava and Paroja tribes. You'll camp near their village, form new friendships, join the evening revelry and dance the Dhemsa long into the night!

Day 6: Koraput

Today sees you walk through thickly forested hills encountering small hamlets and warm smiles along the way. Participate in evening temple rituals to Orissa's most beloved deity, Lord Jagannath.

Days 7 - 8: Rayagada

Hop on a train and pass over rivers, through forests and into a string of numerous tunnels. Visit the vibrant Chatikona market, where you can join the Dongria Kondh and fawn over fancy items, admiring their countless hairpins, earrings and nose rings. There's time to stroll through nearby villages and surrounding forest, then sample some local snacks, try your hand at the potter's wheel, share a laugh and revel in the animated atmosphere.

Day 9: Chilika Lake

Today you'll unwind on the tranquil waters of Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon. Spot rare migratory birds and playful dolphins, then stroll through fishing villages, bask in the tropical sun and feast on fresh seafood.

Day 10 - 13: Puri

Soak up the traditional cultures of Puri; wander through the old city, stroll along the beach and pick up local souvenirs at the lively night market. Later, you can cycle through lush countryside and bumble through back roads, then meet village craftsmen- masters of traditional painting. There's also a chance to visit Konark, the famous UNESCO World Heritage.

Details

Getting there

Your joining point for this tour is Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.
You can get to Vishakhapatnam by train and plane. The tour itself will depart from Hotel Daspalla.

Price includes

Accommodation, meals (for four days), guide, all transport, entry to sites

When is best

Different departure dates can be arranged upon request. Prices vary depending on the size of the group.

Typical Duration

13 days

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed