



Pristine beauty of Pankang Teng Tso lake



**T**his is not your run-of-the-mill winter destination. Tawang, on the north-western edges of remote Arunachal Pradesh state that borders China, has been described as a "hidden paradise". And with good reason. Getting there isn't easy. But for those willing to make the effort, the reward is a breathtaking experience.

Tourist brochures will say the best time to visit Tawang is between April and October. True, Tawang in summer is beautiful beyond compare. But a winter trip to this far-flung region is guaranteed to be one that will be long remembered. Plan your visit for February, when the temperatures are more manageable than in December and January.

Located in the eastern Himalayas at an altitude of 3,500 metres above sea level, Tawang covers an area of 2,085 sq km and can be reached by road from Itanagar, the state capital. If you start early, you can avoid an overnight stay at Bomdila. Enroute is the Sela Pass, the second-highest motorable road in India. A halt here is a must for some spectacular views. There is a frozen lake near the pass, and witnessing

the sunset there is, as one tourist put it, like "achieving nirvana".

The region, in summer, is all about cobalt blue skies, green pine trees, tranquil lakes, cascading waterfalls and flowers in a million hues, especially orchids. But in winter it is the all-enveloping white of the snow that brings out the freshness of nature. The Himalayan views can only be described as awesome.

The inhabitants of the area belong largely to the Monpa tribes. The town is home to Tibetan Buddhism's biggest monastery, after the Potala palace in Lhasa, and the 6th Dalai Lama was born here.

To the south of the town, the Tawanchu river carves a deep gorge as it rages by, while jagged cliffs rise steeply towards the north and snow capped peaks frame the east. To the west, the 400-year-old Tawang monastery looms on the horizon on a 2,760 metre high ridge, its enormous yellow roof and white walls standing out like a beacon for miles on end.

Tawang is also a popular haunt for several adventure sports. The rivers Tawang-Chu and Namjang-Chu are ideal for river-rafting

activities. There are other options as well: Rock-climbing, paragliding, skating, skiing and hiking.

#### MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

There are several beautiful lakes and hot water springs around Tawang. One is Pankang Teng Tso lake, just 17 km from the township. Other eye-catching lakes are the Sangetser Lake, Banggachang Lake.

**Orchidarium:** There is also Orchidarium at Tipi on the banks of the Kameng river in the West Kameng District, enroute Tawang.

The town of Tawang itself is modern, with a bustling bazaar and fluttering prayer flags. The best way to enjoy Tawang is to walk around the town. And once you have had your fill, make a trip to Zimithang to see the impressive Gorsam Stupa, the Tatsang gompa, the Khinme monastery and the Singshur nunnery. The Sangeshar Lake, en route, is one of myriad lakes that make Tawang the splendid haven.

**Permits:** Indian tourists visiting Arunachal Pradesh require an Inner Line Permit, which takes approximately three weeks to be issued. Foreign tourists intending to

#### Arunachal Pradesh



visit Arunachal need clearance from the Home Ministry and a Restricted Area Permit, which takes approximately three weeks to be issued. The permit is valid for 10 days. A minimum of four and a maximum of fourteen tourists must travel together on a tour arranged through an approved travel agent.

#### TOURIST INFORMATION

##### How to reach

**By Air:** The nearest airport is Tezpur which is 345 km from Tawang. There are also helicopter services from Tezpur and Guwahati to Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh.

**By Rail:** The nearest railhead is Bhalukpong, 280 kms from Tawang.

**By Road:** There are regular bus and taxi services from Bomdilla to Tawang which is 180 km and takes 10 hours.

**Best time to visit:** The best season to visit Tawang is between April to October.

**Accommodation:** Deputy commissioner, Tawang, can be contacted for accommodation at the Government Circuit House and Inspection Bungalow. There are several hotels and tourists lodges such as Hotel Nichu and Hotel Shangrila around Tawang.

For more on India tourism, visit:  
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