

# Trip To Tawang

## Arunachal Pradesh - The Rising Sun Region

Arunachal Pradesh - Dawn-Lit Mountain Province, the largest of the Seven Sisters States of Northeast India by area. Growing up in the border state- Assam, from childhood I had the desire to explore the enchanting beauty of the land of rising sun in India. So this summer, when we went for vacation we thought of going on an exploration trip. This is a small peek of our trip. I know words cannot explain the serenity and tranquility that we experience in the journey but I cannot stop myself from sharing my experience on the trip.

### Road trip

We were a group of two families with two children and we took our own vehicle for the trip. Our place is very near to the border of Arunachal Pradesh. So we thought of exploring both the options. First one for reaching Tawang and second one for coming back to our native. Inner Line Permit(ILP) is required to visit Arunachal Pradesh, so it has to be made beforehand so that you can enter Arunachal Pradesh without any hurdle.

Options to enter Arunachal Pradesh by road to Tawang:

- Bhairabkunda-Bomdila-Dirang-Tawang
- Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Dirang-Tawang

You can reach Bhalukpong from Guwahati via Tezpur. You will need an Inner Line Permit to cross Bhalukpong.

Our journey to explore the land of the rising sun begins on 21st April, 2023.

### Day 1: Bhairabkunda - Sangti Valley(Dirang)

We started from our native place Kharupetia around 6.50 am, the weather was pleasant and reached Bhairabkunda around 8.30 am. Weather started to become chilly and it was windy as well. We were shivering and thought of completing our breakfast as we don't know when again we will be stopping and how the weather will behave. There is a SSB camp and a few small roadside restaurants, so we ordered some hot Maggi and tea and our children enjoyed their maggi in the chilling environment. We started at 9.00 am after spending some time in Bhairabkunda and passed the Arunachal Pradesh check post, where our documents and ILP were checked. From there we started our journey of enriching our soul with the enchanting beauty of mountains, stopping now and then and inhaling the refreshing air. We reached Bomdila after a 4 and half hours journey at 1.30 pm bypassing Shergaon and Rupa. In between we have stopped multiple times to enjoy the beauty of nature. We had our lunch in a roadside restaurant in Bomdila bypass, but as soon as we stepped out of our car we could feel the chilliness of temperature, it was 16 degree celsius. We ordered 4 non-veg thali, the food was simple but hot and good in taste that satiated our hunger. After lunch, around 2.30 pm we started for our destination for the day and reached Sangti Valley at 4.00 pm. Tourists can stay in Dirang, Bomdila, Shergaon and Rupa. There are lots of attractions in these places.

- **Dirang** - Dirang is one of the smaller but most beautiful tourist spots. Whether you go hiking at the Sangti Valley or head for the National Research Centre on Yak, rejuvenate your tired

body, mind & spirit at the Hot Water Springs or enjoy panoramic sights of paddy fields, the fruit orchards and the untouched Sangti River, Dirang will make your visit worth every moment spent here. With the rising sun, take an intriguing glimpse of birds like the Tragopan, Sunbird or Redstart, or interact with the locals, go shopping at the Dirang Market.

- **Bomdila** - The serene paradise brings plenty of places to visit in Bomdila that will excite you to take a trip. It is a quaint town boasting of vibrant Tibetan heritage and culture and an adobe to many Buddhist tribes. By visiting these famous hill towns, you can relax your mind amidst the natural beauty. Bomdila is well-recognized for its fantastic environment a bit cooler than Dirang with apple orchids and Buddhist monasteries. Also, many trekking trails are available in this region that will make the trip of adventure seekers worthy. It brings spectacular views of lush greenery and snow-capped Himalayas.
- **Shergaon**- Shergaon is home to a number of attractions and landmarks that offer a glimpse into the region's rich cultural heritage. One of the must-visit places in Shergaon is the Shergaon Monastery, a beautiful Buddhist temple that dates back to the 17th century. There are plenty of activities also to enjoy in Shergaon. Trekking is popular, and there are several scenic trails that offer breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. Tourists can also go birdwatching in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, or visit one of the many tea gardens in the area.
- **Rupa**- Rupa is a small hill station, which lies on the banks of the meandering Tenga River. Tourists can enjoy a picturesque view of the hills and the Tenga River. A morning or evening drive around the Rupa border is breathtaking. The natural beauty at these places not only touches our minds but our souls even. The town also provides a great opportunity to visit Shertukpen, the authentic tribal village in the city.

Why did we select Sangti Valley to stay?

- The valley is known for picturesque scenery and weather.
- The valley is also a tourist destination for trekkers.

Located 15 km from Dirang, we stayed in the Lanjom homestay near the Sangti riverside, hearing the sound of the flowing water which is a pristine feeling to your soul. Rooms were newly made with all the modern comfort. As soon as we arrived they served us hot coffee which we had near the riverside. Other formality was done by the time and then we quickly freshen up and went for a small walk around as in hills always darkness envelop the environment very quickly and we were new to that area, so we resist ourselves to explore further and returned to our homestay. We planned to get up early and go for the exploration in the morning and since it is a Dawn-Lit Mountain Province, we will get ample time to explore. We called it an early night, on a cold night hearing the sweet and soothing sound of flowing water we went into a deep and peaceful slumber.

**Day 2: Sangti Valley(Dirang)- Sela Pass - Tawang**

It was bright and sunny outside when I peeped through the curtain of the window. I thought we were late so I called my husband to get up and looked at my watch. I was quite surprised to see that it was 4.30am and we could see the sky clear and bright. At 5.00am we went to explore Sangti Valley, we crossed the small river(Dirang Chu), the water was freezing cold but very clear and after walking for half an hour we reached in a heavenly place surrounded by beautiful mountain range around and full of greenery everywhere with a small river flowing along combined with a pleasant weather. A full package which calms your mind and soul and fills your heart with a pristine feeling. We stayed there for sometime in nature and absorbed the beauty in our souls. We then headed back to our homestay by trekking the mountain back to our place instead of using the same route. It was a bit of fun, as we have come to explore after all.

After reaching homestay, we quickly got ready and had our complimentary breakfast and started our journey towards Tawang. We have to cross Sela Pass to reach Tawang. We all were excited as Sela Pass is about 13,800 ft. above sea level. We reached Sela Pass at 1.30 pm, when we were approaching Sela Pass the road side was covered by snow and the temperature was -3 degree celsius. We did not expect such a low temperature as it was in April. We were totally unprepared, it needed lots of courage to step out of the car as it was too windy with snowfall. Roads were fully covered by snow of 2 inches. It was so chilling that we could barely stand out or walk as our legs were deep in the snow and because of wind and rain it has become quite slippery. There is a Buddha statue and Sela lake for sightseeing, but we could not go down near Sela lake as we had to climb down stairs to reach near the lake which was half frozen but the beauty was mesmerizing. A small para medical camp was there where it had provisions for room heaters, oxygen cylinder and few eatable items such hot tea/coffee, chips and maggi. They basically help travelers if someone feels sick at that high altitude or got stuck there because of snowfall. (Note: Later we came to know, you have to cross Sela Pass before 12.30 pm after that weather changes drastically). We had Maggi with a cup of tea and warmed ourselves for our journey further. There is a small store for buying snacks items and woolen clothes in case anyone missed to carry gloves or caps they can get there. Even we had to purchase hand gloves and woolen cap from there. We started for Tawang enjoying the snow capped mountains, and reached at 5.00 pm in our Mila homestay. Temperature was 3 degrees celsius. Rooms were very cozy with room heaters and bed heaters. The hospitality of the host was excellent, she quickly provided us with hot tea and made us feel comfortable as she understood we still didn't get accustomed with the chillness of the environment. We asked for early dinner as we did not have a proper lunch and we thought of relaxing that day as we already had lots of adventure the whole day.

### **Day 3: Tawang - Sungester - Bum La Pass**

Earlier that night we asked our host to arrange a transport for Bum La pass as we are not allowed to take our personal car, only locals with proper permits are allowed to take tourists to Bum La pass. She arranged everything and the driver also informed us that he will make the permit ready. We were asked to be ready by 8.00 am. We had our breakfast at 7.30 am and started for Bum La Pass and Sungester Lake, popularly known as Madhuri Lake. After crossing the security check post, we moved towards Bum La Pass, roads were filled with snow on both sides and slight snowfall was also happening so the weather was very cold. Sungester lake and Bum La Pass bifurcate from one common Y- point halfway, so our driver informed us that we will visit Sungester lake first rather than Bum La Pass as lots of vehicles were waiting on the road for the Bum La Pass route, as there is

snowfall and the road has to be cleared before we can move up. So all of us agreed to go to Sungester first instead of waiting there to move towards Bum La Pass. We reached Sungester at 10.15 am, the lake was surrounded by snow-capped mountains. The picturesque surroundings of the lake made us take some snaps. It was freezing cold and windy but as soon as some sunshine fell it was a pleasant environment again. On the hillside, sudden change in weather is quite common. After spending 45 minutes and having some hot snacks at the canteen at 11.00 am we again started moving upwards to the Y point so that we could move towards Bum La Pass. But that day was not our day, as our car driver informed us that his car cannot move up as it has some breakdown so he will not go up towards Bum La Pass but he will try to drop us back to our homestay safely. With lots of hurdles we reached homestay safely at 3.00 pm. With lots of dramatic situations taking the toll of our body and mind, we thought we would relax for the rest of the day. We then plan for the next day as we have to visit Bum La Pass. That day the evening was well spent with bonfire and local food momo as snacks with some old hindi movie song singing. At 9.30 pm we had dinner and our day came to an end on a happy note and with a determination to go to Bum La Pass the very next day and hoping the weather would be pleasant.

#### **Day 4 : Tawang - Bum La Pass**

When we got up, the next day we had a smile on our face. It was a sunny day, we were able to see the beauty around, the serene beauty of the snow-capped mountain came out in the sunshine. After having breakfast we moved towards Bum La Pass at 8.30 am. It was pleasant weather and internally we thanked God for yesterday's incident as the weather has made the beauty of the mountain so pleasant to your eyes. Our driver informed us that there are 108 lakes in that mountain as we were crossing many small lakes when we were moving up towards Bum La Pass and the beauty was serene.

We went directly to Bum La Pass, reached there following all the three gates checking and visited Bum La Pass (15,200 ft. above sea level). One of the Indian army personnel took us to the border (India - China border) and explained to us about Indian LAC and Indian soldiers' sacrifice in 1962. The place was covered by snow, since it was sunny we had to wear sunglasses to protect our eyes. On the way, we stopped in Pankang Teng Tso, commonly known as PTSO lake, to engulf the beauty that remains frozen in winter. We reached homestay at 12.30 pm, relaxed a bit, had our lunch then thought of exploring Tawang monastery, the second biggest and oldest in Asia and the War memorial. A beautiful Stupa is built in memory of the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives in 1962 Sino-Indian war. After sightseeing in Tawang we went to the market and bought some souvenirs.

#### **Day 5 : Tawang - Bhomdila - Kharupetia**

Today we planned to start early and visit Nuranang falls before moving towards Dirang. It was a pleasant day, we started at 7.00 am. We asked our host to pack our breakfast, so that we can have it when we reach Nuranang falls. Nuranang falls is a 100 m high waterfall, located 2 km northeast of the Jung town. It was named after a local Monpa girl named Nura who helped Indian soldier Maha Vir Chakra Jaswant Singh Rawat in 1962, Sino - Indian War. The falls came into limelight after one of the songs in the Koyla movie was shoot here. The water falling from such a height was a beautiful and thrilling experience. We had our breakfast near the riverside enjoying the calmness of nature, totally captivated by the surroundings for some time and then started our journey towards Dirang. We reached Sela Pass around 11.00 am. This time the weather was pleasant and we went

near Sela lake climbing down till the lake and enjoyed the surroundings. Suddenly the weather started changing, snow started falling and the environment became chill. We quickly crossed Sela Pass and reached Dirang. In Bomdila bypass we had our lunch at 2.30 pm. We planned to stay in Bomdila for one more day but we changed our plan and continued with our journey. Then we started our journey towards Kharupetia, our home town, through another route, Bhalukpong. Exploring the beauty of the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, passing through Tenga Valley and capturing the beautiful moments that make your heart smile and mind refresh, we reach our destination at 9.30 pm.

To explore Arunachal Pradesh you need more time, we have explored only a small part of it. But these 5 days were truly an experience which we can never forget. A trip full of adventure and soul replenishing and mind refreshing.