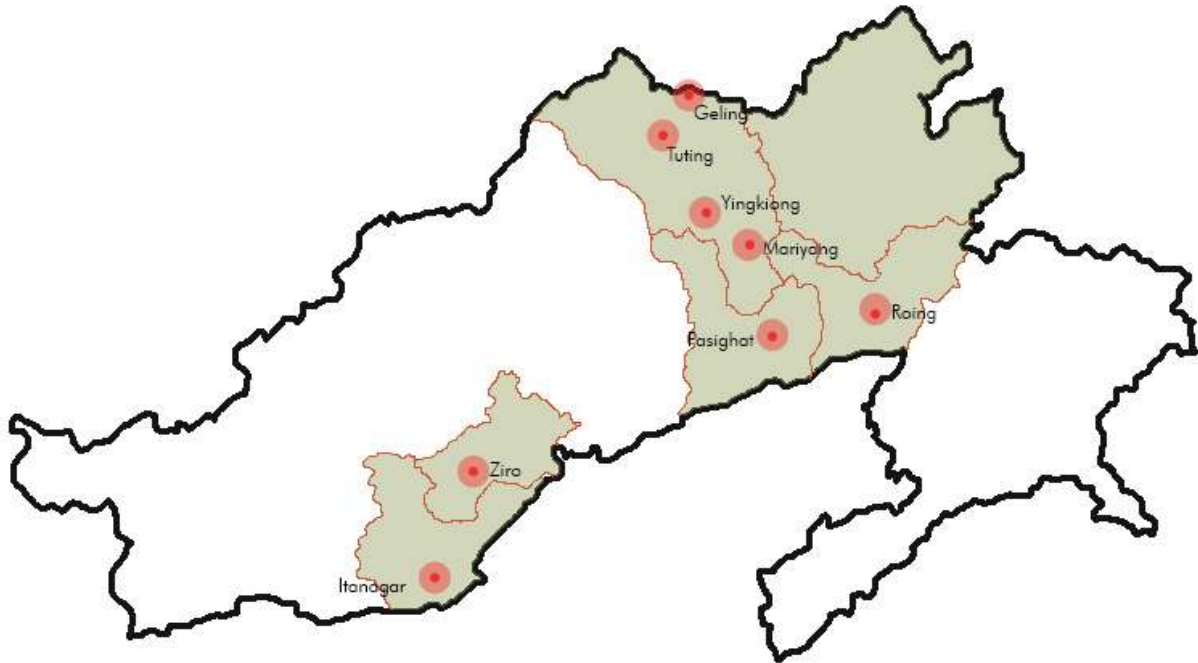




ARUNACHAL PRADESH

A journey to the land of Rising Sun



THE JOURNEY AT A GLANCE...

The journey began in New Delhi where we caught a train from NDLS, New Delhi to Dibrugarh . It was a tedious 48 hours journey but the excitement of what lay ahead of us kept us going. From Dibrugarh it was a 2 hour journey by road to Pasighat. On reaching Dibrugarh, we hired a local taxi to drop us to Pasighat.

Our first day in Pasighat we went around the town and over the next day trekked to a nearby village called Pongging which is accessible only by a hanging bridge over the mighty Siang and paid a visit to one of the oldest gentleman of the Adi Tribesmen in a nearby village called Ayeng to learn the origin and history of the Adi Tribe.

On our third day we began ascending towards Upper Siang where we would be exploring Damro, Mariyang, Yingkiang, Janbo, Tuting and Geling which is the last indian village bordering China over a period of 7 days.

We visit the capital city of Itanagar during the last leg of our Journey.

we set out...

Our journey started with the three of us , tons of luggage and one RAC seat awaiting us in our train from New Delhi Railway Station to Dibrugarh, a journey of 2350 km, 2 nights and 1.5 days, a memory that will be cherished with mixed feelings. Our train journey was quite fun though, the mesmerising hills-capes and the change of visual from urban jungles to an actual landscape of greenery made up for our RAC seats. A small IRCTC cup of chai, chit chat about our long tiring semester and overcrowded compartment with army



personnels going to Nagaland was our inside train experience. After an extremely long train journey, we reached our destination. We took a taxi, loaded it with our luggage and left for Pasighat, another 2 hours to our home stay for the next two days. On the way to Pasighat, the three of us hardly spoke. Tired but captivated by the beauty of the nature surrounding us , Prateek Kuhad playing in background , the trees were lined up as if to welcome us to the land of the rising sun. We reached Pasighat at 12 pm and headed straight to our home stay we had booked prior to our travel. Despite the tedious journey, we freshened up as fast as we could, got ready to go around the quiet lazy town of Pasighat. The market was sparsely populated and we had our lunch of momos and thukpa in the locally known Shangri-La. That evening, we witnessed the sun set from the banks of river Siang, a sight words fall short of describing.



Pasighat



We took the local taxi to Ayeng to visit one of the oldest tribesman of the Adi Community who would tell us many interesting stories about the origin of the Adis , of his childhood and youth, of simpler times that seem utterly unimaginable . He lived in a traditional Adi Ekum made up of bamboo with stilts of about 1.5 – 2 m high, covered with treated bamboo mats around. The fire place was the central element of the home, where the family sat, ate food and it is also used as a warm living room. Mr. Kangkong Borang, about 108 years old had a bag full of stories to tell. He went on for about an hour telling us his stories whilst sipping his usual concoction of red tea mixed with whiskey, which was an unusually interesting sight for us. We told him about our travel plans afterwards and bid our goodbyes. We then trekked to a nearby village called Pongging which is accessible only by a hanging bridge over the mighty Siang river where we interacted with the locals who would tell us some more stories. With so many exciting stories, traditions, customs and the culture of the Adis we grew restless to unfurl the long leg of our journey; ascendance towards the Upper Siang districts...



Upper Siang

The following day, we embarked on our road journey to Mariyang. We rented a self driven car. It was a journey of about 5 hours where we made a lot of stops during the entire course of our journey, making pit stops near the various waterfalls and rivers we crossed. The roads were really bad too and we had to stop in between multiple times. We stopped at small dhabas where we enjoyed simple authentic Adi cuisine: a plate of rice, boil vegetables and chutney, so delicious, healthy and power packed us for the rest of our journey. While we were moving in the car, the landscape changed in a sudden gaze and within a gap of 5 kms we saw grasslands, forests, snow-capped mountains, rivers, almost every type there must be in nature. It was so fascinating yet so serene, close to nature and so different from the bustling cityscapes we all came from. As



we were ascending upwards, the air grew chillier and thicker and mists began to form. We stopped at Damro for some time to rest and the beauty of the settlement was absolutely breath taking. We further continued to Mariyang and halted for a night there in one of the Inspection Bungalow by negotiating with the IB keeper to let us in for the night. We unloaded our car and walked to the nearby market which was constituted of about 5 dimly lit ration and stationary shops, bought vegetables, local spices and meat from there for the night. We went around the vicinity of the Inspection Bungalow we were staying at but it started getting dark soon and to our surprise there were no working street lights and in a jiffy everything turned pitch black. We hurried back to the IB, prepared our food in the common kitchen, had our dinner and went into a sound slumber.

We left for Tuting the next day, it was a very long and tedious journey and due to the condition of the road it took us 9 and half hours to cover a mere 150 kms. We were getting used to the vegetation and the fauna of this land but the rivers always startled and surprised us, it was always nice to pass or drive along the mighty Siang. The nights in Tuting were too dark with no electricity and network connectivity but on the bright side, we witnessed the starry nights there in high definition. By evening it would become scary and we could hear howls of animals and the night

darkness with no visibility. We couldn't find any lodging accommodation in Tuting on account of our very late arrival at night and resorted to approach the town Inspection Bungalow in hopes of shelter for the night. After a very tiring negotiation, we were finally provided admission in the IB which became our home for the next three days in Tuting. Over the next few days we went around Tuting, mostly on foot and later to Geling, which is also the last Indian Village bordering China. A beautiful small village nestled in the valley there we met people of the Memba tribe. It's a small community village living near the China border.



We visited an elderly politician who had a really beautiful small wooden house which seemed to be inspired by Bhutanese architecture. It was well furnished and the view from his home was spectacular overlooking the entire village. We were awestruck by the peaceful environment they lived in, their simple nature, the fact that they are so cut off from the rest of the world yet very happy, humble and full of gratitude. He told us lots of fables about how his family migrated to Geling from Tibet and settled in the mountains. Upon further exploration in Geling, we found out that the whole village was celebrating the victory



of a local leader and a feast was underway. The Head Council of the village very graciously welcomed us to join them in their merry making. The feast had just begun with choices of alcohol, buffalo meat and other snacks while the other guests were chanting to god offering their prayers

and gratitude for the day. It was quite an experience to learn about their culture and customs. We left the place with lots of memories and the warmth of the people. They treated us very generously with so much love and care and wished us all the best for our future endeavours and journey.



From Tuting we returned to Mariyang, halted for a night and the next day, left for Damro, a small village of the Padams, a sub tribe of the Adi community of Arunachal Pradesh. With a population of some hundreds, the village is divided amongst the Pertin, Perme, Tayeng, Ratan, Lego and Borang. We spent the longest time in Damro where we interacted intensively with the locals, stayed at their homes, witnessed their day to day activities, joined them in their agricultural practise which is the main source of their livelihood, studied



the construction systems and practices of the adi ekum(traditional house) , their other community practices, the animals they keep, and stories about their culture and customs. We were visiting



during the sowing season, hence the peak of the hustle. The Padams traditionally produce rice and millets and we were able to visit one of the millet farms on the slopes of Damro hills. After the sowing season, the villagers spend their other days in making handicrafts like bamboo furniture, traditional weaves, hats and other gears, traditional handloom, etc. Their day usually starts from 3 in the morning as the sun rises between 3:30-4:00 am. It was really an amazing experience to be in a slightly different time zone.



On our last day in Damro we got to witness the pre harvest festival of Solung. The women of



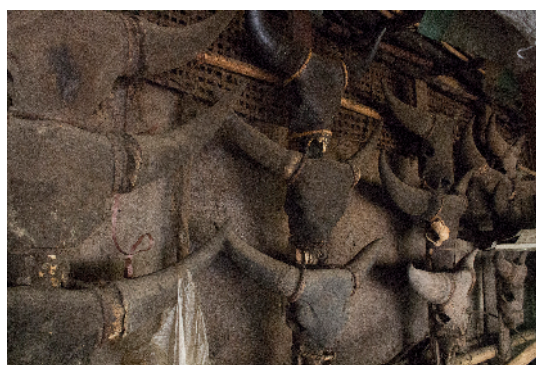
the household , all adorned in the traditional Gales (red wrap arounds) would dance around the hums chanted by the local shaman of the village known as Miri Abu. It was a lovely sight to see all the village girls in their red and black traditional Gales while the men of the village would sip rice beer and engage in conversations. We joined the Borangs later in their celebration, while the elderly girls were dancing, we made friends with the cute little ones, who accompanied us.



So many memories, learnings, experiences, stories and breathtaking sunsets, it was quite a diversifying experience. The whole journey was so engaging and we were completely engrossed in the radiance it had to offer. We thank Xtreme G2x for choosing us and offering the grant without which even a fragment of this entire journey would not have been possible. It has been really very helpful in exploring something we could not have imagined to do. The journey brought us together to seek fulfilment unfathomable and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for everything.

Amala | Anandita | Oyili

GALLERY



A badge of honour , the families display their collection of



Charred ceiling seen in Mr. Kangkong Borang's humble abode as a result of the absence of outlet for the smoke from the fireplace.

Hanging bridge over the mighty river Siang.



Sunset by the Mighty Siang



Anandita looks over the Mighty Siang and the distant hills



Oyili strikes a conversation with the locals in Pongging



Amala strikes a pose in the scenic millet farms of Damro hills.



The women set off for work early in the morning with their children on toe.



The men collect burnt logs after Jhum cultivation.

An Adi woman carrying food for her family working in the fields.



A local looking over his farm after Jhum Cultivation





The Girls perform the Ponung dance in the evening on account of Pre Solung



The children are left free at home under the supervision of their grandfather during the agriculture season.



A traditional granary to store the rice produce located in a common area allocated in the village.



With the Ex-ZPM of Geling, Shri Dorjee Lama at his residence.



Entry point to the last Indian village.



Traditional Adi house in Janbo

Thank You