



Bophill falls awaits, with 360 degree water splashes.

PHOTO: ZIAUS SHAMS

During the Eid holidays, I went to Meghalaya through the Tamabil-Dawki border with seven friends. On our way to Sylhet from Dhaka, I was telling one of them that I had never seen a waterfall and that this trip's itinerary seemed to have a lot of those. A day later, while we were standing on a cliff facing Nohkalikai Falls, my friend came up to me and said, "From not having seen a waterfall in your life to this—how do you feel?"

Nohkalikai falls. I remember the very moment I first saw it—our driver, Dammar *ji*, parked the jeep right near the cliff and told us to get back as soon as possible. We hurried up the stairs, only wanting to take a quick look.

I looked down, and I could barely make out a waterfall among the clouds. I could hear the sound of water constantly flowing and splashing. After I stood there with my mouth wide open in wonder for a few minutes, the clouds suddenly

my vacation just standing there, staring at the Nohkalikai falls.

We later found out that it was by a pure stroke of luck that the clouds had parted and given us a perfect view. It was monsoon in Meghalaya, and while the many waterfalls in Cherrapunjee are beautiful during this season, they are very rarely visible. We went to Seven Sisters falls later in the day, but all we could see were clouds. We could hear it though, and it sounded just as beautiful.

This day-long excursion to Cherrapunjee (or Sohra) had started with Elephant Falls, which is near Shillong. So technically, that was the first ever waterfall I saw, and I was thoroughly unimpressed. This three-tiered waterfall is very accessible because there is a walking path, but you have to make a long uphill climb from the bottom tier to the parking lot. The falls are pretty, but it's not worth the physical effort.

After that, our first stop in Cherrapunjee was Mawkdok viewpoint, which was completely shrouded in clouds. We had been told that Cherrapunjee is the "wettest place on Earth," and once again, this is a legitimate superlative. It is inside the clouds and the rain never stops. For the first time in my life, I genuinely enjoyed the rain, but that might be because we were very well prepared.

If you are planning to visit Meghalaya, buy a raincoat or a poncho. The latter is not the most flattering of outfits but my bright blue poncho was my best friend on this trip.

Clouds aren't fluffy

and other revelations at Meghalaya

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At that moment, I couldn't quite put my feelings into words. I have not been the biggest fan of water, or wet places in general. I despise rain and I am quite scared of all types of water bodies because, first of all, they're wet, and second of all, I am not sure I know how to swim. These [irrational] fears have stopped me from appreciating beautiful feats of nature even from afar—whenever I see a glorious water body, I find myself imagining how horrible it would be to drown in it.

So I was not expecting to shed a few emotional tears after seeing the

cleared.

Nohkalikai falls is the tallest plunge waterfall in India. Superlatives are quite difficult to fathom when you read about it, but when you see it in person, you know that it's an absolute privilege to be able to witness this majestic phenomenon. There were a few waterfalls going at the same time, plunging into a pool, and I was standing on the nearby cliff, feeling small and insignificant, but content. I, very reluctantly, went back to the car as my friends and Dammar *ji* insisted, but I genuinely wanted to spend the rest of