

Living Root Bridges

UPSC Current Affairs Notes

Living Root Bridges are **aerial bridges** built by **weaving and manipulating the roots of Indian Rubber trees**, which have meticulously grown over a period of time and are among the biggest attractions in **Meghalaya**. They are locally called ***Jing Kieng Kri***.

The topic, Living Root Bridges, remain in the news as Zoological Survey of India has sought UNESCO Tag for it. Keep reading to know what a living root bridge is. This [will help in the IAS Exam](#) preparation.

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Interesting Facts about Living Root Bridges

- The Living Root Bridges are **made from the Rubber Tree Roots**. They are also known as ***Ficus Elastica* trees**.
- These root bridges are **about 100 feet long**.
- The perfect shape is obtained after almost 10 to 15 years.
- Once they are fully grown, these roots **last for about 500 years or even more**. Although some roots of these bridges decay because they remain associated with water continuously, others grow into thick and long roots and hence make up for the decay.
- They serve as **connectors, to cross streams and rivers**. They have been doing this **for generations** in the Indian state of Meghalaya.
- They are **world-famous tourist attractions**. The two most popular tourist spots are- **Riwai Root Bridge in Shillong** and **Umshiang Double Decker Bridge in Cherrapunji**.
- Living Root Bridges in Meghalaya are **recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Sites**.

Living Root Bridges - Location

Living Root Bridges are a prime attraction of the Northeast. They are found in **West Jaintia Hills district, East Khasi Hills district**, and a few other areas of Meghalaya.

History of Living Root Bridges

The concept of Meghalaya's living bridges began almost two centuries ago (180 years). The people of the **Khasi clan living in Meghalaya** put rubber tree roots into hollow canes of Areca nut palm that met halfway across the stream. These roots were nurtured and cared for properly until they grew enough to reach the opposite bank. Soon when they got completely entwined with each other, and made themselves capable enough to carry heavy weight, they formed bridges, and they were named ***Jing Kieng Kri***.

Features of Living Root Bridge

- These bridges are elastic in nature.
- Their roots easily combine with each other
- These trees can grow in rough and rocky soils.
- They highlight the symbiotic relationship between people and nature.
- These structures have a capacity to hold more than 50 people over the bridge.

UNESCO World Heritage Site

- A World Heritage site is classified as a **natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance**, and a space which requires special protection.
- These sites are officially **recognised by the UN and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation**, also known as UNESCO.
- UNESCO believes that the sites classified as World Heritage are important for humanity, and they hold cultural and physical significance.