



Tour of Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Bhutan

Duration: 13N/14D

Itinerary:

Day 1: Delhi, India

Accommodation: Lemon Tree or similar.

Upon arrival in Delhi make your own way to our hotel. In the evening, we meet as a group for an introductory briefing and our welcome dinner. (D)

Day 2: Darjeeling

Accommodation: Mayfair Resort or similar

In the morning, we will fly from Delhi to Bagdogra in the Indian state of West Bengal (2 hours). From Bagdogra, we will be driven to Darjeeling (3 hours). Darjeeling is a town located in the foothills of the Himalayas, so this promises to be a scenic drive along a country road dotted with tea gardens, agricultural fields, and small villages.

We will check in at our Darjeeling hotel and have the afternoon and evening free.

In the late afternoon you could take a stroll in the Darjeeling Mall in the heart of Darjeeling town. It is also known as Chowrasta. “Chow” means four and “rasta” means road—the place where four roads meet. It is a must visit place for all tourists who want to get a feel of the city. The place has many old book and curio shops, some more than 100 years old. Walk around the shady wooded pedestrian road and enjoy the mist and sunshine. (B, D)

Day 3: Darjeeling - Ghoom - Darjeeling

Accommodation: Mayfair Resort or similar

We will take an early morning drive to **Tiger Hill** (2,573 metres) in order to see the dawn light breaking over the snow peaks before sunlight even reaches the lowlands. Visible from Tiger Hill are Mt Everest and Mt Kanchenjunga (world's third highest peak), an unforgettable sight. The summit at Tiger Hill also commands a fine view of the vast plains of North Bengal.

Tiger Hill is also the summit of Ghoom (also spelled Ghum), a small locality that is home to the highest railway station in India, the **Darjeeling Himalayan Railway** (or Toy Train) sitting at 2,258 metres. We will take a toy train ride to Ghoom. The steam locomotive snakes its way through the zigzag trails and loops. It makes a round at the picturesque Batasia Loop with Kanchenjunga as the constant backdrop. At Ghoom, we will visit the **Himalayan Railway Museum** before returning to Darjeeling.

We will visit:

- **Tibetan refugee Self Help Centre** – established on 1st October 1959 to rehabilitate displaced Tibetans who had followed His Holiness, The Dalai Lama to India in early 1959. The Tibetan craftsmen can be seen at work at the centre. We will drive along the road to the Lepong race course area for a stunning countryside view over the rolling slopes of lush green tea gardens.
- **Himalayan Mountaineering Institute Museum** – which boasts a rich and rare collection of exhibits; the HMI was built to commemorate the success of sherpa Tenzing Norgay, who accompanied British Edmund Hillary to the summit of Mt Everest in 1953, the first to ever do so
- **Himalayan Zoo** – a high altitude wildlife park and a home for the Siberian Tiger, Himalayan Black Bear, Red Panda, Snow Leopard and many Himalayan species endemic to the region.

Back in the town centre, we will visit the local market of fashionable handicrafts and jewellery. Laze away in the Mall – the hub of the town. Have a cup of coffee at Caventer's open air restaurant and watch a glorious sunset.
(B, D)

Day 4: Darjeeling - Gangtok

Accommodation: Norkhil Hotel or similar

Today we drive to Gangtok via Peshok road (4 hours). The view of the fascinating tea gardens at Peshok with the Kanchenjunga snow range and Rangit River Valley will demand you to stop for a while for a refreshing break. From the road junction of Tista Bazar, we follow the winding road along the emerald River Tista. To break up the drive, we can spend time in some scenic spots on the way to enjoy the landscape.

We reach **Gangtok** by afternoon. Gangtok is the capital of the mountainous Indian state of Sikkim, a former Himalayan Kingdom. This is a buzzing town showing a fusion of modern and traditional culture. Established as a Buddhist pilgrimage site in the 1840s, the city became capital of an independent monarchy after British rule ended, but joined India in 1975 as its 22nd state.

In the afternoon, if Day 4 of our tour falls on a weekday, we will visit the **Government Institute of Cottage Industry** where beautiful souvenirs like carpets, handcarved tables (choktses), traditional handicrafts, furniture, woven carpets and other products, are produced and exhibited for sale. Nearby you can also visit the **Tibetology Institute and museum** which holds the world's largest collection of books and rare manuscripts on the subject of Mahayana Buddhism. There are also many religious works of art and thangka, Tibetan scroll paintings typically constructed from silk brocade.

Just beside the institute is the **Dodurl Chorten** encircled by 108 prayer wheels built by late Trulsi Rimpoche in 1945-46. This is one of the most important and biggest stupas found in Sikkim. After checking in at the hotel, consider going for a short visit to the market or walk on the MG Marg (or Mahatma Gandhi road), the most popular area in Gangtok town. (B, D)

Day 5: Gangtok - Rumtek - Gangtok

Accommodation: Norkhil Hotel or similar

From Gangtok, we will take a half day excursion to the **Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre**. Originally built in the 18th century, it was rebuilt in 1960 by the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa (Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, 1924–1981) after he fled Tibet. (The Gyalwa Karmapa is the spiritual leader of the Karma Kagyu, one of the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism). It is a replica of the Kagyurpa Monastery in Tsurphu, Tibet. We will walk and visit the nearby **Shri Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies**, just adjacent to the Monastery Building. (B, D)

Day 6: Gorumara National Park

Accommodation: Sinclairs Retreat or similar

Today after breakfast we set out for a journey to **Gorumara National Park** in the foothills of the Himalayas (5 hours). The first phase of our journey runs through the hills dotted with beautiful forests and villages. From here the road goes down to the vast plains of Dooars, lying in the outer foothills of the Himalayas. We travel through the lush green tea gardens and forests—the unique features of **Dooars**.

We continue to Gorumara – a popular wilderness retreat in the Dooars plains and a national park. This a true wildlife sanctuary, a reserve forest since the 1890s and untouched by human habitation. In the afternoon, we will go on an exclusive car safari to Gorumara National Park. The journey passes through the deep natural grasslands of Gorumara, the natural habitat for rhinoceros, elephants, leopard, bison and many other species of birds and reptiles. We will also visit the watch tower in the core area of the national park. From here we can get a vast panoramic view of the Gorumara grassland. There is a salt pit just at the base of the tower, where the animals regularly come to taste the salt.

After some thrilling excitement, we return to our accommodation in Gorumara. Here we will also have the opportunity to see the different rural life of the plains of Bengal. In the evening, we will arrange a bonfire with a cultural show. (B, D)

Day 7: Gorumara - Thimpu, Bhutan

Accommodation: Hotel Galingkha or similar

In the morning, we drive about 2.5 hours to the Bhutan border. Here we will be met by our Bhutanese guide and driver. After lunch, we drive from the border town of Phuentsholing to Thimphu (5 hours), moving from the warmer climate of the south up to the foothills of the Himalayas. Thimphu is the capital and largest city of Bhutan. Take an early evening stroll around town and soak in the atmosphere of this magical capital. (B, L, D)

Day 8: Thimphu

Accommodation: Hotel Galingkha or similar

Today we will enjoy a full-day sightseeing tour of the capital. Among the places we will visit is the National Textile Museum. The Bhutan Textile Museum was opened in 2001 at the instruction of Queen Ashi Sangay Choden, one of the four wives of the old Bhutanese King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The national museum was established to preserve and showcase the rich cultural heritage that has been preserved between Bhutan's mountainous ridges. The building itself was constructed to replicate a traditional Bhutanese house. Visitors really get a full taste of the country's cultural heritage, and the lingering influence of tradition on the present.

We also visit the Thimphu Chorten, the Golden Buddha (Buddha Dordenma). We explore the postal museum, showcasing Bhutan's interesting stamps, as well as the Changangkha temple. (B, L, D)

Day 9: Thimphu - Punakha

Accommodation: Hotel Zhingkhram or similar

In the morning, we drive east to the Dochu-la (*la* means "pass"), where, weather permitting, there are panoramic views of the Himalayan snow-peaks. The drive takes approximately 3-4 hours. We will visit the modern Victory Temple at Dochu-la, which was built to commemorate Bhutan's victory over Indian insurgents in the early 1980's. In the afternoon, we visit Punakha Dzong, perhaps the most photogenic of Bhutan's Dzongs, situated at the confluence of two fast-flowing turquoise rivers. (B, L, D)

Day 10: Punakha - Paro

Accommodation: Olathang Resort or similar

This morning we walk to Khamsum Yulley Namgyel Chorten, a chorten (Buddhist shrine) commissioned by the Queen of Bhutan in 2004. This uphill walk offers a beautiful view of the Punakha Valley. In the afternoon, we drive to Paro (4 hours) where we will have time to visit some handicraft shops for souvenirs of the trip. (B, L, D)

Day 11: Paro

Accommodation: Olathang Resort or similar

This morning we enjoy some more sightseeing together in Paro, visiting the Paro Rinpung Dzong, a large monastery and fortress and one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. It houses the district Monastic Body and government administrative offices of Paro Dzongkhag.

We also visit the National Museum housed in the Ta Dzong (watch tower) which was built on top of the hill above Rinpung Dzong to defend Rinpung Dzong and the Paro valley during times of war, in an unusual circular

construction resembling a conch shell. The Ta Dzong was badly damaged by an earthquake in September 2011, but has now been renovated. Here we see a magnificent collection of Bhutanese artefacts – costumes, religious paintings, arms, textiles and a fascinating collection of Bhutan stamps. Near the museum we may also be able to see a demonstration of traditional wood turning skills by local artisans who make traditional wooden bowls and cups – and members of the group may try their hand in wood turning as well!

In the afternoon we will see the Drukgyel Dzong (fortress of victory), constructed to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders in 1644, and destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. Nearby is the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of the most sacred shrines in Bhutan. (B, L, D)

Day 12: Paro

Accommodation: Olathang Resort or similar

We rise early to visit the spectacularly situated Taktsang Monastery (Tiger’s Nest Monastery), a highlight of any visit to Bhutan. This involves a hike of 3-4 hours to reach the site, on a 900-metre ascent up to the monastery at 3,120 meters. This monastery is associated with Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, who is believed to have introduced Buddhism into the Indian subcontinent in the 8th century. He is venerated as a “second Buddha” by adherents of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Himalayan states of India. There is a tea shop around the halfway mark, which provides excellent views of the monastery, and some visitors are content with reaching this site. We return in time for lunch, and the rest of the afternoon is free. (B, L, D)

Day 13: Paro - Delhi

Accommodation: Lemon Tree or similar

We take our flight to Delhi and transfer to our hotel. In the evening we meet again for a farewell dinner. (B, D)

Inclusions:

- Two domestic airfares in economy class
- 13 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 13 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 13 dinners.
- Services of an Odyssey Tour Leader.
- Local guide throughout the tour.
- All sightseeing and entrance fees.
- Tipping and gratuities.

Exclusions:

- International flights.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, alcohol and laundry.

Term & Conditions:

- Rates are not valid for peak Festive season i.e. New Year , Diwali , Pushkar fair etc.
- Rates are based on Hotels Subject to Availability at the time of making Reservation. In case of unavailability in mentioned hotels,alternate accommodation will be arranged in a similar category hotel.
- Rates are subject to change if there is any Fair & Festival, Major conference, events in travel destination
- Early check in / late checks out is subject to availability of rooms.
- Cancellation charges would be as per the company policy.
- Vehicle confirmed will be as per Itinerary and not at disposal. AC will work only in the plains and will be switched off during hill drives.
- All sightseeing mentioned are subject to weather conditions, political conditions & traffic conditions in the destination.
- Any sightseeing missed due to natural calamities / weather conditions is non-refundable.
- All entrances fees will be on direct payment basis as per Itinerary.
- It is not advisable to travel in night, if necessary supplement charge applicable

Travel Basics:

- Passport and valid Visa
- Water Bottle with a Filtering System
- Daily Medications
- Phone Chargers
- Camera
- ID Proof
- Toilet Papers
- Walking Shoes
- Ear Phones
- Cap
- Power bank
- Sun Screen Lotion
- Wipes
- Ladies basics
- Mosquito Creame/bands/net depending upon your itinerary.

Booking Terms:

- Deposit of 25% of the package cost at the time of booking.
- Need 50% payment of the package cost, 60 days prior to departure date
- Need 100% payment of the package cost, 30 days prior to departure date

Why Choose Us:

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quality of delivery has qualified us to earn an affiliation and approval as Tour Operators from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. AND Tourism Department, Government of Delhi under License No 728/2016. Apart we are proud active members of National & International level of travel trade association like IATO (Active), ADTOI (Active), TAFI, ASTA, PATA, ECO Tourism and many more. Established over 18 years ago, the company has emerged to be one of the large travel establishments reaching out to the discerning travelers from continents across the globe, even while it's reputation for providing the best in holidays of style remains unequalled. Personalized service, luxurious accommodation at attractive prices and informed guidance are the company's forte.