

Experiential & Interactive Walking and hiking tour in Bengal & Sikkim

Focus

City || Village || Tea Garden || Nature

Total Duration

7 Nights 8 days

Area Covered

Kolkata | Darjeeling |

This 8 days long plan in Bengal area will emphasis on a non- regular route and local experiences. We will mostly focus on the interaction with the locals and take you to inner layers of the city and villages to give you an insight and a meaningful travel experience.

This tour will combine story telling, experiencing local cuisine, Tea Garden in the hills, Mountain train ride, Hike in the highest part of Bengal (along the Indo Nepal Border) to see the magical landscape with the tallest mountains, meet people in their village and much more.

Some Images from the trip



Itinerary

Day 1 || Kolkata arrival

Kolkata - A centre of the Indian Independence movement, and once the centre of modern Indian education, science, culture, and politics— Kolkata's recorded history began in 1690 with the arrival of Job Charnock, an agent of the English East India Company, at three swampy villages named Sutanutee, Gobindapur and Kolikata. From diverse points of view Kolkata is considered a unique, bewitching city, a place riddled with contradictions between order and chaos, a place that consistently keeps attracting the tourists from near and far. The city's multilayered planes of reality and the related visuals – the old and the new co exist side by side.

On your arrival at Kolkata International Airport our representative, who will give you a short brief on the tour and on the city and help you to get on the car. We take you to your pre booked hotel and assist you to check in.

Regular check in Time in Hotel is 2.00 PM. If you arrive early you may have to wait at the lobby for some time for the rooms to get ready. If you arrive too early you may ask us for a pre booking from the previous night.

Optional afternoon activity

Choose to take lunch at your hotel or go outside in the city center and explore the traditional Bengali cuisine in the Esplanade area. There are several authentic restaurants serving traditional Bengali delicacy. A must try is famous Bengali fish – Ilsha or Vetki. After lunch go for a stroll along the busy hubs and absorb the city around you. Or just simply stay back at the hotel and try to get rid of the jetlag after a long flight.

Or if you are in full of energy and can't wait to hit the city, we would recommend you to go for a visit to the New Market area, the busiest market place that brings life in Kolkata, and enjoy its mazy hysterical shop filled alleys to get accustomed with the city life.

Day 2 || City Walking tour in Kolkata with story teller

Today after breakfast get ready for the special city walking tour with our story teller, who will meet you at your hotel and take you to the original city of Kolkata which is much older than the colonial era.

Start walking with our special storyteller from the city's oldest sweet shop (inspiration always begins with good food) and climax it up at Albert Hall Coffee House, the center of city's *adda* (Intellectual gathering), as we call an informal creative interaction. In between he can lead you to the nooks and crannies of this *boipara* (book colony), which he had explored over the last 20 years from more than one angle; first as a student leader, and then as a professional of publishing industry, which this area claims to fame for.

Strolling (and noshing with small bites) through the street food outlets and heritage eateries, eventually we arrive at the most interesting part of the "Black Town" (no, we didn't, British colonials used to say it so once upon a time) – the Chitpore Road. Not only has the oldest cartable road in Bengal, this road homes the oldest eatery of Awadhi discipline. How it feels if you wrap up our story-walk here over a plate of orthodox *Biryani*?

Total tour 4 Hours' experience/Walking involves 2 hours/Inclusive of an experiential lunch, noshes, beverage, essentials & stories

Sunset Cruise from 4:00pm to 7:00pm with temple visit

A Cruise on the Ganges will be the best way to explore the city and its history. From the time when Job Charnok dropped his first anchor at Cossim Bazaar to the modern monolithic bridge, the second Hooghly-Bridge, the winding river has woven itself around the lives of this city. There are 54 *ghats* (quayside) and all have great history and heritage.

As the sun sets, painting an evening sky with a hundred shades of red and orange, the Evening Cruise sails to Belur Math to see the '*Sandhya Arati*' (Evening Prayer). We will take you back to the hotel for Dinner.

Day 3 || Kolkata Airport transfer and Fly to Bagdogra

Today we complete a multi layered and multi culture tour in Kolkata and take you to airport. *Normal Hotel check out time is 11 AM and if you have an afternoon or late evening flight you can have a free day in Kolkata to explore on your own or you can ask for additional assistance from the guide and transport. We can take care of your luggage, which can be safely stored in the hotel or packed in the car.*

Arrival at Bagdogra Airport

A small but busy airport for North Bengal and Sikkim surrounded by lush green tea gardens on the Himalayan foothills the Airport with several daily flights connects Delhi (2hr), Kolkata (1hr), Guwahati (40min) and by weekly international flights to Paro (30min) and Bangkok (3hr). On a clear day you will be able to see the long mountain range of the Himalayas from the flight.

On your arrival you will be greeted warmly by our representative, who will give you a short brief on the tour and hand you over the travel documents before taking you to the car.

Bagdogra to Tea Garden near Darjeeling – 2hrs drive

Darjeeling is known worldwide for its high quality orthodox tea. Today we will take you for a guided tea garden tour in Darjeeling where you will have a firsthand exposure to learn different processes the tea leaf passes through before it reaches you in your morning cup. During this tour we will take you to one of the finest tea-producing garden in Darjeeling and you will be given the opportunity to walk through the beautiful lush garden and pluck tea with the garden workers before you reach the factory. Here you can see the various method of tea processing from the collection of tea leaves till it is taken to its final grade. You can also go through the tea testing session with the garden manager. *(Tea Factory and Garden activity is closed from November to March and each Monday. However, a walk in the garden and meeting with workers is still possible)*

We check in a nice tea resort inside a tea plantation. This is a recreated Planters Bungalow overlooking a beautiful valley with rolling tea bushes.

You have ample opportunity to walk around the garden and enjoy the scenic beauty as you sip the finest Darjeeling orthodox tea from your balcony.

Day 4 || Full day in the Garden

Today we take you to a guided Tea Garden tour with the manager who will explain you about the tea history of Darjeeling and the different tea quality. If the factory is open you will be taken to the factory to see the process of the tea making. A special tea testing session will also be arranged for you. You will also meet the tea garden workers in the field and will have the opportunity to talk to them.

The tea garden has an ample scope of bird watching. With a binocular and our accompanied guide and a book you can set out for a short bird watching tour around the garden. We will arrange a picnic lunch by a mountain stream. After lunch you will be driven back to the resort.

In the evening if you are interested we can arrange a small bon fire and a local cultural performance by the garden workers.

Day 5 || Tea Garden to Tumling (3070M/10200Ft) in Singalila National Park

**Trek – 13kms in 5hrs,
Altitude Increased: 935M / 3100Ft,
Approx Trek Gradient: 30 - 40 Degree Uphill,
Trekking Skill – Easy to Moderate**

Today we start for an exciting tea house Trek in the upper ridges of Singalila Range. After breakfast we drive to Maneybhanjang and from we follow a wide pebble path that goes through the thick pine forest to Chitrey – a wide flat meadow on the hill slope with a lovely small monastery. We advise you to take a short break at the scenic spot to get your normal breathing back after a steep riding for 2-3 kilometers. Enjoy the landscape with the refreshing cool breeze blowing from everywhere, while we serve you some Juice or candy.

We start trekking again from Chitrey towards Tonglu. You can feel the change in the temperature as you climb up sharply. The changes in the vegetation are also visible as the altitude increases. The pine forests now changes to Rhododendron forests, which set ablaze with the blush of flowers during spring (April-May). After a couple of hours trek we reach Meghma – a small quaint settlement at 2900M with couple of shops and few huts. Here you can take a tea break again and interact with local Nepalese people.

We continue our trek from Meghma following an open wide path along the ridge. This part of the trek is rather gentle and has brilliant view of the snow peaks all along the way. Within an hour or so we reach Tumling (2900M / 9657Ft). Our first night halt after a long day trek will be in a Privet Tea House or Trekkers' Hut. You have a free evening to relax. Get refreshed and enjoy the chilling evening while we prepare your dinner.

Day 6 || Tumling (2900M / 9657Ft) to Sandakphu (3636M / 12108Ft)

**Trek Distance - 17kms in 8hrs,
Altitude increased: 1635M / 2360Ft,
Approx Trek Gradient: 25 - 45 Degree Up & Downhill,**

Trekking Skill – Moderate to Strenuous

Wake up early in the morning to see the fabulous sunrise over Kunchenjungha Mountains. We serve you hot tea/coffee and breakfast and then start the trek to next destination at Kalepokhri. From Tonglu we descend to Tumling – a small village on the Indo-Nepal Border and then to Joubari village all along the Nepalese territory. On the way you will see the simple village people busy with their daily household work – trudging up the hills with load of fodder to feed their cattle or plowing the difficult terrain on the rugged hill slopes. Spend some time in the scenic village and meet the villagers.

Another half an hour trek from here will take you down to Gairibans at 2620M. Situated on a low basin like terrain with forested hills on all side Gairibans is a very important area in Singalila National Park for its rare population of Red Panda. The reach vegetation of Bamboo, oaks and chestnut forests is a natural home of this magnificent little creature. This place also shelters other rare Himalayan species like Himalayan Black Bear, Himalayan Goat, leopard and many species of rare birds. Satyr Tragopan, Monal Pheasant are some of the most interesting feathered creatures. Have a lunch break at the Trekkers hut in Gairibans and try to take a rare shot of a Red Panda or Tragopan in the wild.

From Gairibans the trail goes up to Kalepokhri for 6 kms. This part of the trek has some sharp bends as you follow the village road till Kanyakatta, and then a pleasant walk for an hour with great views all-around takes you to Kalepokhri – another little village on the Indo-Nepal border. The brilliant view of the snow capped mountains stretched across the horizons will never allow you to feel the strain of walking. We reach Sandakphu by afternoon and take you to your room at a small lodge. Get refreshed and we know you are hungry.

Sandakphu commands a magnificent view of the entire snow ranges of Kunchenjungha Mountains. All majore peaks of Kunchenjungha range with Mt Everest and Makalu in the far Western Nepal, Donkyala Pass and Chola Range in Tibetan Frontier with Chomlochori Range in Bhutan are distinctly visible in a clear day. Watch the splendors of nature - as the day progresses mists coiling up from the valley below to form a vast see of clouds beneath your feet. It is now time to go back to your lodge to seek the warmth of room.

Day 7 || Sandakphu (3636M / 12108Ft) to Rimbik (2286M/7612Ft)

**Trek Distance – 20kms in 6hrs,
Altitude reduced: 1350M / 4500Ft,
Approx Trek Gradient: 25 – 35 Degree Downhill,
Trekking Skill – Moderate**

It is another beautiful morning at Sandakphu. Wake up early to see the magic being created over the horizons with the early rays of Sun gently touching the summit of the world's highest mountains. If you are lucky you can see an unbelieving span of 320kms of whole snowy ridges of Nepal-Sikkim-Tibet and Bhutan. Spend some spellbound moments watching at the vast mountains as nature pours its colours on the snow ridges and you will forget everything else.

We serve you breakfast and start for the days trek to Rimbik. The long downhill trek passes through some lovely villages at Gurdung and then Srikhola. Srikhola on the bank of a lovely small stream having the same name is an important bird watching place in the Singalila circuit. The cold moist atmosphere with rich vegetation the region offers an ideal nestling place for many species of birds of Lower Himalayas. We have our lunch break here at the lovely stream side and then continue to Rimbik – the road head and the biggest village in this sector. This part of the trek has a gentle gradient and passes through the dense lower foothill forest, cardamom plantation and bamboo groves. You will have an ample scope to watch verity of birds on the way and may be wild orchids too.

Transfer to Darjeeling (Alt 6825Ft / 2050M) - 90kms in 3hrs

Darjeeling, "The Land of Thunderbolt" or popularly known as "The Queen of Hills" is regarded as one of the best Hill Retreats in the world for its pleasant climate, great views of the highest mountains, beautiful tea gardens producing world's finest brews, Himalayan Heritage Steam Train, colonial Raj heritage and charming people.

On arrival we assist you to check in at Hotel. Relax in the Hotel and Dinner.

Day 8 || Darjeeling to Bagdogra Airport

After breakfast we leave Darjeeling and drive to Bagdogra in 2.5hrs. From Bagdogra you have the connecting option to New Delhi and Kolkata for your international departure.

_ Tour Ends

Some Essential Information

Accommodation

We give below 2 different category of stay in different location

PLACE	OPULENT OPTION	REGULAR OPTION	NIGHT
Kolkata	Taj Bengal or Grand Oberoi	Park Plaza or The Corner Courtyard	2 Nights
Mirik Or Kurseong *(Tea belt)	Chamong Mountain Retreat	Tumsong Tea Estate Or Cochrane Place	2 Nights
Sandakphu Trail*	We will use mainly tea House run by locals. We do not have high end hotels in this route. However, in superior category we can use Habres Nest in one of the nights, which is the best in the area. **(Please see foot note for more information on this part)		2 Nights
Darjeeling	Windemere Hotel or New Elgin	Cedar Inn Hotel	2 Nights

***The itinerary may change a little depending on the final accommodation selection**

Price Details for Opulent Hotel option (Valid till March 2019)

1 PAX IN SINGLE	2 PAX IN 2 SINGLE	2 PAX IN 1 DOUBLE	3 PAX IN 2 ROOMS	4 PAX IN 2 ROOMS (2 CARS)	SGL SUPP
€ 2,250.00	€ 1,900.00	€ 1,400.00	€ 1,300.00	€ 1,250.00	€ 400

Price Details for Regular Hotel option (Valid till March 2019)

1 PAX IN SINGLE	2 PAX IN 2 SINGLE	2 PAX IN 1 DOUBLE	3 PAX IN 2 ROOMS	4 PAX IN 2 ROOMS (2 CARS)	SGL SUPP
€ 1,700.00	€ 1,350.00	€ 1,050.00	€ 1,000.00	€ 950.00	€ 300

The Tour will cover

- Accommodation on full board in all places except in Kolkata. Here it is on Half Board
- Vehicle support throughout with driver in Kolkata and in Darjeeling/Sikkim
- Special story walker for walking and food tour in Kolkata
- Accompanied English speaking guide for Darjeeling
- During Trek in Sandakphu service of personal porter will be provided
- All activity as mentioned in the plan with flexibility
- All entrances and Tax as applicable

** Important note for Sandakphu Trekking

The accommodation in Sandakphu route that runs through Singalila National Park, are arranged in Privet Lodges or Trekkers' Huts. These lodges or huts are run and maintained by the hospitable and friendly local Nepalese or Tibetan people. They offer very basic facilities with room, bed and blankets. However, you may still carry your personal sleeping bags although it is not mandatory. In most of the places the rooms are privet but the toilets are not. You will get hot water in bucket for a limited quantity. Bathing is not advised in Sandakphu and Phalut. Room does not have any heater but we provide hot bag and arrange fire in the lobby or dining room. Food is available in those lodges but we carry our own cook and food staff to ensure a better quality and variety. To avoid littering in the National Park bottled water is not carried and drinking water is boiled instead. Electricity or telephone connection is not available in most of the places. Some of the lodges however, use generator for a specific time. Cell phone connection is available in Sandakphu and also in some other few stops on the way but not throughout. Although Sandakphu is regarded as one of the best trekking routes in the Eastern Himalayas but the Top is accessible by 4W Jeep also. You may come across few vehicles riding up the hills while you are trekking. National Park authority restricts open fire, carrying weapons or explosives, or collecting/killing any flora or faunal specimen in and around the park territory. **Best time to visit:** April – May for flowers and October-December for clear view.

Map of the area travelled

