



EASTERN HIMALAYAS-SIKKIM WALKING HOLIDAY

TOUR PRICE WITH INTERNAL FLIGHTS	£ 1800 PER PERSON ON TWIN SHARING BASIS SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST <i>PRICES ARE ALL INCLUSIVE WITH NO HIDDEN OR LOCAL PAYMENTS</i>
FLIGHTS	WE CAN ARRANGE TO BOOK FLIGHTS FOR YOU THROUGH OUR PARTNER TRAVEL AGENT OR YOU CAN ARRANGE YOUR OWN FLIGHTS AND WE WILL ARRANGE FOR YOUR TRANSFER FROM THE PLACE WHERE THE TOUR STARTS
BEST TIME TO TRAVEL	OCTOBER -APRIL
TREKKING DAYS	5 DAYS WITH STAY IN TEA HOUSE/ LODGE
HIGHEST ALTITUDE	3600 METRES/ MODERATE GRADE

Overview

Our 12-day tour in the Eastern Himalayas covers some of the important tourist destinations in the northern parts of Bengal and Sikkim. It includes hiking in the higher mountains in Sikkim and touring around villages. You will be taken for a walk through the rhododendron valleys in Singalila range in Darjeeling with a fascinating view of the vast mountain range. It is followed by a visit to the charming old town of Darjeeling and an unforgettable steam train ride. You move further toward Sikkim to spend some refreshing days in a village and explore the traditional village life. On your way back relax for a few days in Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim.

Trip Highlights

- Walk in tea gardens
- Hiking along the Singalila ridge and rhododendron valleys
- Spotting Red Panda and Satyr Tragopan in the forests
- View of the highest peaks
- Darjeeling with toy train ride and visits to tea gardens
- Home-stay in rural Sikkim with bio organic food, participation in village activities, visits to the monastery and hanging out in Gangtok

Destinations: Kurseong (1 Night), Sandakphu-Phalut trekking trail (4 Nights), Darjeeling (2 Nights), Pelling (2 Nights), Gangtok (2 Nights)

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Bagdogra - Kurseong (45kms, 1 ½ hrs)

Fly in to New Delhi or Kolkata International Airport – take a connecting flight to Bagdogra (45minutes from Kolkata and 2hrs from Delhi). Our representative will meet you at the airport and after a traditional welcome drive to Kurseong with sweeping views of snow mountains and vast plains, foggy pine forests, old colonial buildings and churches and a nostalgic steam rail station. The Land of White Orchids on the way to Darjeeling – Kurseong is a prime tea estate area with some world class organic tea producing gardens, the road goes through the plains till Sukna - the gateway of Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary. From here the road goes up the hills - through the dense forests of Mahananda Valley. At times your car meets the famous and sprightly toy trains chugging along bends and loops on the way. Laze around. Take brief halts for snapshots. And proceed to Kurseong. We help you check in at Cochran's Place - a recreated heritage style hotel on a ridge with splendid views of the Kanchenjunga mountain range and the tea valley on either side. It was a former residence of stately British Colonial resident, Percy John Cochran. A warm reception with the finest, aromatic Darjeeling tea awaits you. Some light refreshment at the resort. And you are ready for a leisurely walk in the serene tea gardens of Makaibari or Ambootia. Back to the hotel. Spend some time in the small wellness centre if you like. Try some relaxing herbal or tea oil massage or foot bath. Overnight in the hotel at Kurseong. (D)

Day 2: Kurseong- Chitrey (Alt 2800M / 9324Ft) – the starting point of Singalila trek – approx. 45kms in 2hrs drive followed by a trek of 4hrs to Tumling (Alt 3070M / 10200Ft)

In the morning after breakfast, you will be introduced to the trekking crew before you start your trek, from Maneybhanjang follow a broad pebbled path that goes through a thick pine forest to Chitrey – a wide flat meadow on the hill slope with a small monastery and few village huts. Then as you walk from Chitrey towards Tonglu, you will feel the change in the

temperature as you gain heights. The vegetation changes accordingly, the pine forests leave room for rhododendrons, the woods are burning red if you are there sometime between March and May. After a couple of hours' trek you will reach Meghma – a small quaint settlement at 2900M with few shops and huts, where you will have lunch and continue your on open wide path along the ridge. The gentle trek offers you a brilliant view of the snow peaks all along. Within an hour you will reach Tumling (2900M / 9657Ft). The first night halt after the day-long trek will be at a private Tea House or Trekkers' Hut. You have a free evening to relax. A few meters' walk will take you to a viewpoint for a sunrise the next morning. (B,L,D)

Activity: Trek – 11kms in 4hrs, approx Trek Gradient: 30 - 40 degree uphill, trekking skill – easy to moderate

Day 3: Tumling (2900M / 9657Ft) to Sandakphu (3636M / 12108Ft)

Wake up early in the morning for a fabulous sunrise over Kunchenjunga. Some hot tea/coffee and breakfast, then a trek to your next destination – Kalepokhri. From Tumling first walk to Joubari village that falls in Nepal. You do have some time to be with the village folk on your way. Another half an hour trek – and you are at Gairibans (2620m). it's a low basin with forested hills all around. Gairibans is a very important area in Singalila National Park for its rare population of Red Panda. The rich vegetation of bamboo, oaks and chestnut forests is a natural home of this cute little creature. It also shelters other rare Himalayan species like the Himalayan black bear, the Himalayan goat, leopard and many species of rare birds like Satyr Tragopan, Monal Pheasant and so on. Then a break for lunch at the trekkers' hut. 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 takes you to Kalepokhri – another little village on the Indo-Nepal border. Kalepokhri is a small lake of crystal clear water encircled by prayer flags and rhododendron shrubs. After a trek of about 1.5hrs by a well laid pebble path you reach Bikebhanjang at 3346M /10978ft. Now it's a sharp ascent – through the prime forests of Rhododendron and Magnolia – to Sandakphu, the highest point in Darjeeling Hills. Suddenly the dazzling snow capped mountains engulf you. You reach Sandakphu by afternoon and have your lunch there. Sandakphu commands a magnificent view of the entire snow range of Kunchenjunga. And you can see all the peaks - Mt Everest, Makalu, Donkyala Pass, Chola Range, Chomlohoril! (B,L,D)

Activity: Trek Distance - 17kms in 8hrs, Altitude increased: 1635M / 2360Ft, Approx Trek Gradient: 25 - 45 Degree Up & Downhill, Trekking Skill – Moderate to Strenuous

Day 4: Sandakphu (3636M / 12108Ft) to Phalut (3600M/11988Ft)

A morning at Sandakphu and especially on a bright and clear day is a spectacle with the sight of the unbelievable span of 320kms of all the snowy ridges of Nepal-Sikkim-Tibet and Bhutan. Today, after an early breakfast, set off for a trek to Phalut – another important destination in the Singalila Park, it is a long trek but the route lies along the gentle ridge of Singalila with hardly any sharp climb. Listen to the sound of silence from the high alpine meadows. You walk past clearances suddenly showing amidst shrubs of rhododendron and forests of chestnut and burnt silver fir. Herds of yaks and cattle idly graze in the pastures and the mountains are a constant companion. After a walk of about 2-3 hrs you reach Sabarkum. Where you will have lunch. Continue your trek again and finally reach at the base of Phalut from where it is a sharp ascent of about half an hour to reach the camp site/ trekkers' hut in Phalut. Overnight in Phalut. (B,L,D)

Activity: Trek Distance – 21kms in 8hrs, Altitude reduced: 36M / 120Ft, Approx Trek Gradient: 25 – 35 Degree Up & Downhill, Trekking Skill – Moderate

Day 5: Phalut (3600M/11988Ft) to Rammam (2560M/8525Ft)

Nestled atop a hill, Phalut is a tri-junction of Bengal, Sikkim and Nepal, and perhaps, the best viewpoint for the vast panorama of mountains stretched across the northern horizons. The thin layers of early morning mist, soft sunrays piercing through it, create a sublime vista as you watch motionlessly. After breakfast it's a long trek down to Rammam. The trail hurriedly descends through the virgin alpine forests of chestnut, pines, hemlock and fir till it reaches at a confluence of two small streams that form Gorkhey Khola stream, which later tributes to Rammam River. Gorkhey is a nice picturesque village on the riverside with clear water rushing down the valleys. You can go for a swim in the river to release the strain of trek if you fancy. From Gorkhey we climb for 1 km to a hidden valley called Samandin. There is a small picturesque forest village on a beautiful plateau. Then it's a smooth descent through moist temperate forests of mixed vegetation and bamboo groves – orchids and wild strawberries. From the Rammam River it's another 2km uphill trek take to the Rammam Trekkers Hut. (B,L,D)

Activity: trek Distance – 18kms in 6hrs, Altitude reduced: 1040M / 3460Ft, Approx Trek Gradient: 25 – 30 Degree Downhill, Trekking Skill – Easy to Moderate

Day 6: Rammam (2560M/8525Ft) to Rimbik (2286M/7612Ft) and then drive to Darjeeling (3hrs drive)

You can have a slightly leisurely morning, have your breakfast and then trek down to Rimbik, this part of the trek is fairly easy upto Srikhola river. The small riverside village by the same name is an important bird watching place in the Singalila. The final stretch of the trek leads you to Rimbik, which is just seven kilometers away. This part of the trek has a gentle gradient and passes through dense lower foothill forest, cardamom plantation and bamboo groves. The trail goes down to the riverbank, then across the river it moves uphill to end in a jeepable road that leads on to Rimbik. After a short tea break at Rimbik drive to Darjeeling through a fascinating country road dotted with tea gardens, agricultural fields and small villages. Reach Darjeeling in the late afternoon. Rest of the evening in leisure. (B,L,D)

Activity: Trek Distance – 15kms in 5hrs, Altitude reduced: 265M / 910Ft, Approx Trek Gradient: 20 – 25 Degree Downhill, Trekking Skill – Easy to Moderate

Day 7: 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, lush tea gardens producing world's finest brews, Himalayan heritage steam train, Colonial Raj heritage and – above all – for its charming people. Have your breakfast and go for a fascinating toy train joy ride to Ghoom - the highest station in India. The heritage toy train is more than 125years old and runs on steam locomotive, snaking its way through the zigzag trails along the motorable road to Ghoom. It makes a round at the picturesque Batasia Loop. Kunchenjunga is the constant backdrop. Also visit the museum, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, old Tibetan Refugee handicraft centre. Drive along the road to Lebung race course area for a stunning countryside view over the rolling slopes of lush green tea gardens. Drive back to the city and visit the local market of fashionable handicrafts and jewellery. Overnight in Darjeeling. (B,L,D)

Day 8: Darjeeling- Pelling (145kms, 5hrs)

After breakfast, drive to Pelling, located in the countryside of West Sikkim blessed with incredible views of highest peaks of Greater Himalayas, old monasteries, sacred lakes & waterfalls known for myths & legends. After check in formalities you can go for short walk to the Pemayangtse Monastery or to the lonely wooded roads leading to the valley for a close view of the Snow peaks.

Day 9: Pelling

After breakfast go for a day tour of Pelling and visit Pemayangtse monastery, Sangachoeling Monastery, Khecheopalri Lake and Rubduntse.

Pemayangtse Monastery is perhaps the most important and widely discussed monastery in Sikkim. Built more than 300 years ago by one of the most revered saints Lama Lathsun Chempo from Tibet, belonging to the Nyingmapa Sect of Buddhism, Pemayangtse Monastery is regarded as a premium monastery in Sikkim.

Sangachoeling Monastery literally meaning “the place of secret spell” is the oldest among all Sikkimese monasteries in Pelling and is known for the Yellow hat of Tibetan Buddhist. It is built on a remote hill top overlooking the forested valleys and snow peaks and is about 30min uphill walk from Pelling.

Khecheo-palri, which in Tibetan Language means ‘A Palace of Flying Meditating (female) Deities’, is the holiest lake in West Sikkim associated with many myths, legends and folklores. Set amidst dense broadleaf forested hills at an altitude of 1700m, this small lake has a very powerful presence in the mythology of Sikkim and also in the social lives of the local villagers.

Rubduntse is known for the ruins of the second capital of Sikkim during 1814AD.

Return to your lodge and rest of the evening in leisure. (B,L,D)

Day 10: Pelling- Gangtok (140kms, 5hrs)

After breakfast drive to Gangtok and on the way stop at the picturesque Temi Tea Garden located on the gentle hill slopes. Temi in Sikkim is the only high quality tea producer for an international market. Take a short break to enjoy the landscape and drive towards Gangtok via Singtham along the Teesta River. Before reaching Gangtok you will take a short detour to Rumtek – an important monastery in Sikkim, built in 1960 by His Holiness the late 16th Gyalwa Karmapa it is a replica of the original Kagyurpa Monastery in Tsurphu, Tibet, the seat of His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa Rinpoche, head of the Karmapa sub sect of Kargyudpa order of Tibetan Buddhism. It now functions as the headquarters of the Dharma Chakra Religious Centre. Also pay a visit to the adjacent Shri Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies. Here have a traditional lunch then drive further to Gangtok and reach by afternoon. Go for a walk in the city. (B,L,D)

Day 11: Gangtok

A day-long tour in Gangtok means a lot of things: Start with a visit to the Government Institute of Cottage Industries (closed on Sunday, 2nd Saturday) for beautiful carpets, hand carved tables (choktses), traditional handicrafts, furniture and other products. The Orchid House is a rich store-house of rare orchids and ornamental plants. The Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology boasts of a huge collection of rare books and manuscripts on the subject of Mahayana Buddhism and many religious works of art including ancient Thangkas (Tibetan religious scroll paintings). On the same premises is the Dudrul Chorten - encircled by 108 prayer wheels - built by late Trulsi Rinpoche in 1945-46. This is one of the most important and biggest stupas found in Sikkim.

Try some delicious traditional cuisine in a local restaurant and then drive to Enchey Monastery – built in 1901 by Lama Druptob Karpo during the reign of Sidkeong Tulku. The monastery was built in the style of a Chinese pagoda and belongs to the Nyingma Order of Buddhism. Drive to Himalayan Zoological park – and try to spot the red panda and other Himalayan mammals in almost natural surroundings on a 300 hectares of forests land. The Tashi View point offers you a bird's eye view of the town in the twilight against a crimson Kunchenjunga in the setting sun. (B,L,D)

Day 12: Gangtok- Bagdogra (135kms, 4hrs)

Check out after breakfast and drive back to Bagdogra Airport. The 4-hour drive along the Teesta river valley is again a different experience. You will be dropped well in time to catch your flight for your onward journey. (B)

Includes

All accommodation on tour
Meals as specified above
Tour guide
Transportation
Sightseeings mentioned above other than optional
Porter charges,
Permit charges
All activities including toy train ride
All applicable entrances and tax

Excludes

International flights
Visa
Tipping

Accommodation

Cochrane House, Kurseong

A recreated heritage style hotel, nestled on the foothills of the Himalayas, with splendid views of the Kanchenjunga mountain range and the tea valley on either side, Cochrane Place is the restored & renovated stately British colonial home of Percy John Cochrane, MBE. Restored in stone, log & cast iron splendour, replete with fine wooden panelling, plaster work, antique furniture & beautiful objects of art, throughout providing a warm and friendly ambiance. The rooms are furnished with contemporary amenities & retain an old world charm. Guests can relish nostalgic recipes from the British Raj & savour authentic Anglo Indian cuisine at the award winning cafe and restaurant.

Tea Houses, Singalila

Simple lodges with private bathrooms (hot water in buckets) and basic facilities but comfortable.

Cedar Inn, Darjeeling

This is a boutique hotel, located high above the main town, nestling amidst groves of evergreen trees in serene environs. The hotel location is arguably its greatest asset, setting it above and apart from the hustle of downtown and offering a visual treat of spectacular mountain vistas. The view is without a doubt one of the most memorable in the world. Extensive hand crafted woodwork adorns the interiors, adding warmth and a touch of Traditional elegance, while exotic Himalayan foliage and the soothing sound of rippling water bring the outdoors in.

Norbugang Resort, Pelling

Located in a hillock overlooking Mt. Khangchendzonga, Norbu Ghang Resort sprawls over an abundant private space with plenty of room to amble around or relax in quiet solitude. It has special suites and deluxe rooms with private balconies. Our cottages have been aesthetically designed to offer pleasant private moments amidst finely landscaped gardens. Traditional ethnic Sikkimese themes grace the interiors of each room and include all amenities for comfort and convenience. Here you can relax in the warm comforts of the Dzongri Bar over a drink as you recollect the day's adventures, or pamper your taste buds at the Silver Fir Restaurant where our chefs stir up both local and international cuisines. Check the Curio Shop for souvenirs of local handicrafts to take back home.

Teentaley eco resort, Gangtok

Teentaley is located amidst a rural setting but the facilities at the lodge are modern and comfortable. The place grows its own food and everything is organic.

Passport and Visa Requirements

A passport (with at least six months remaining validity) and a current Indian visa are required for this trip. Please note that you are required to have a passport with a machine-readable bar code. You will need to apply for your Indian visa in advance from the relevant issuing authority in your home country. British Passport holders can apply for an e-Tourist Visa, a single entry visa valid for 30 days. Please visit the website <https://www.hcilondon.in/pages.php?id=28>

Travel Insurance

You must take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation, loss of baggage and holiday cancellation.

Vaccinations

Please visit your GP for guidance for vaccinations while travelling to India. Please also visit this website for more details [http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk/destinations/asia-\(east\)/india.aspx](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk/destinations/asia-(east)/india.aspx)

Currency

The currency used is Indian Rupee.