

Darjeeling-Sikkim Post-Extension Tour: September 19-24, 2022

Sep 19: Amritsar - Bagdogra – Darjeeling / The Elgin (B, D)

Transfer to airport for flight AI 454 depart 06:50 / arrive 07:55 to Delhi, connecting flight AI 879 depart 11:15 / arrive 13:15 to Bagdogra. Upon arrival meet your accompanying escort and drive (90 km / 3 hours) to Darjeeling.

Once the summer capital of India. The name Darjeeling is derived from 'Dorje Ling' (place of the thunderbolt). The area is stunning and quaint with its little villages, tiny waterfalls and even tinier toy train track. The tranquil environs of the surrounding hills offer a perfect setting for the tea estates and monasteries.

Sep 20: Darjeeling / The Elgin (B, D)

In the early dark hours of the morning, we drive one hour to Tiger Hill to see sunrise over the Himalayas. Wait with patience for an unforgettable experience of catching the black night turning lighter, suffusing with dull-red, then brilliant orange and bright gold as the sun rises over the peaks of the Kanchenjunga Range (27,500 feet). Return hotel for breakfast.

Afterwards we ride the Toy Train one way to Ghoom, departing 10:40 am, arriving 11:30 am (subject to operation of the train). It is a treat to arrive at the train station sometime before the departure and watch them prepare the vintage steam engine for the journey. Only about four bogies and a vintage 1st class chair car are attached to this engine which still needs to stop mid way to fill up its tank with water and wait till it heats up enough to make steam. One can climb up the engine for a close inspection, take photos with it and with the driver and the train supervisor.

The car will meet us at Ghoom train station and drive approximately 3 kms/20 min to the Monastery at Ghoom. Known as Aloobari Monastery, it is the oldest monastery in the region and quite interesting. We return to Darjeeling by car (45 min).

This afternoon visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (established in 1954 by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary who first climbed the Mt Everest in 1953). The Everest Museum here has photographic and archival record of all attempts ever made to scale the world's highest peak.

We'll also visit the Tibetan refugee self help center, the Bhutia Busty Monastery which houses the original text of the Buddhist *Book of the Dead* and the Rail Museum to learn about the toy train which UNESCO recognizes as the World Heritage Railway.

Time permitting, we will visit a tea estate. Darjeeling tea is one of the finest and most sought after teas in the world.

Sep 21: Darjeeling-Pemayangtse (140 km / 4-5 hrs) / Mount Pandim (B,D)

Depart at 830 am driving (approx. 4-5 hours) to Pemayangtse. It is a stunning drive through forests of oak, pine and orchids with the rapturous beauty of the Kangchendzonga range in the background.

Pemayangtse is in West Sikkim, at Gyalshing (140 kms. from Gangtok) and commands an impressive view of Mt. Kanchendzonga. It was originally a small Lhekhang build by Lhatsun Chenpo in the 17th century. Later during the rule of the third Chogyal Chakdor Namgyal, Lhatsun Chenpo's third reincarnate Jigme Pawo extended it and rebuilt the structure.

After check-in, have lunch at hotel restaurant (pay direct).

This afternoon, we will visit Pemayangtse Monastery and Sangacheoling Monastery.

Pemayangtse Monastery belongs to the Nyigma order and all other Nyigma order monasteries in Sikkim are subordinate to it. The monks of Pemayangtse are usually from the leading Bhutia families in Sikkim. There are 108 monks in this monastery. The monastery houses numerous religious idols and other objects of worship, most of which are precious because of their antiquity. On the top floor of the monastery there is a wooden sculpture depicting the Maha Gurus Heavenly Palace "Sangthokpalri." This masterpiece was completed by the late Dungzin Rimpoche, who took five years to sculpt the piece single-handedly.

Sangacheoling Monastery, built in 1697, is also known as the place of secret spells. It has clay statues dating back to the 17th century. The Sangacheoling Monastery is built in a Tibetan style of architecture and houses a sacred three centuries old Buddhist crematorium named Dhuthoe Silwar Tshar. The crematory has become a public crematorium for the people of Buddhist faith. Sangacheoling Monastery has been rebuilt several times over the years, but it still preserves various ancient paintings, accessories and clay statues. The area around Sangacheoling Monastery provides a panoramic view of the Himalayas.

Sep 22: Pemayangtse - Gangtok (120 km / 5-6 hrs) / Norkhill (B,D)

We will depart at 830 am for Gangtok, capital of Sikkim.

En-route we will visit the Bon Monastery, Bon was established in 1980 AD by the late Yung Dung Tsultrim. Bon monastery is a religious pursuit of religion for all the Bon followers. It is an institution where 35 young people are preached about bon teachings. There are only two Bon monasteries in India; one in Himachal Pradesh and the other in the state of Sikkim. The monastery exhibits the fascinating paintings of Bon deities, Bon Demonical Buddha. The chanting of mantras, blowing of conch in the morning, and beating of drums promise to revive everyone's spiritual side. The history of the monastery is derived from a profound respect for nature.

Next we will Buddha Park in Ravangla, developed by the government to promote Sikkim as a pilgrimage destination. A statue of Sakyamuni Buddha was erected in Buddha Park. People from India and across the world come here and seek the blessing of Lord Buddha. The park offers a panoramic view of snow capped mountains, and an ample walkway for visitors to enjoy the serene surroundings and peaceful ambience of the location. There is a meditation center within the park.

We will have hot lunch in Ravangla & then drive onward to Gangtok – The capital of the 22nd State of India, Sikkim is one of the most beautiful hill stations. It is known for the monastery, orchids, high altitude lake, hot water spring, majestic Himalayan range and butterflies.

On arrival in Gangtok, check in to hotel. Evening at leisure. Dinner at hotel.

Sep 23: Gangtok & Excursion to Rumtek- Drive to Siliguri (B,D)

Gangtok, one of the most beautiful hill stations with varied options– It is known for the monastery, orchids, high altitude Lake, hot water springs, majestic Himalayan range and butterflies.

We depart at 8 am for the drive 24 kms/approx 45 minutes to Rumtek.

Rumtek Monastery (aka Rumtek Dharma Chakra Center) is a relatively new monastery. The construction started in 1962 and was completed in 1968. But this is one of the most important monasteries, as it is the main seat of His Holiness Galwa Karmapa, the head of the Kagukpa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism (one of the 4 major Tibetan Buddhist sects). Since the late 1960's, after the arrival of His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, the center has housed some of the world's most unique religious scriptures and religious art objects. Traditional in design, it is almost a replica of the original Kagyu headquarters in Tibet.

This is also known to be the largest monastery in this part of the country. It is home to a large community of monks who continue to perform the rituals and practices of the Karma Kagyu lineage. A golden stupa contains the relics of the 16th Karmapa. Opposite that building is a college, Karma Shri Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies.

About 2 km away from the Dharma Chakra Center is the rebuilt 300 year-old Rumtek Monastery, which was originally built by the fourth Chogyal. The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa lived in this monastery until the completion of the Rumtek Dharma Chakra Center.

Afternoon sightseeing will include: the Government Institute of Cottage Industries, the Research Institute of Tibetology, and Do-drul Chorten stupa.

The Research Institute of Tibetology has the largest collection of books on Mahayana Buddhism in the world. It also has a great collection of old manuscripts, Tibetan paintings, old statues and icons.

The huge Do-drul Chorten stupa is located at a short walking distance from the Research Institute of Tibetology and on a hillock. From the base of the hill there is a short but steep uphill pathway that leads to the stupa. The Chorten Stupa is marked by a golden top dome. This golden top can be seen from various places in Gangtok. (you have the option to stay at the base of the hill if you don't wish to do this walk). The deity enshrined on top of the chorten stupa is known as Dorjee Phurpa or Vajra Kilaya. This chorten is regarded as one of the most important chortens of Sikkim.

We will also visit the Handicraft Centre where one can see the manufacture of Sikkimese Handicraft. You will have some time to walk around the colorful market place of Gangtok.

Return to Gangtok for lunch and then drive to Siliguri (near the Bagdogra airport, (120 km / 4.5hrs). Transfer to hotel. Situated on the banks of the river Mahananda, Siliguri is a tiny hill station nestled in between the Himalayan foothills and the Doar region of West Bengal. Siliguri has its' own airport located in Bagdogra at the distance of 12 km from city centre.

Sep 24: Bagdogra – Delhi

Morning at leisure. Drive to Bagdogra airport for flight AI 880 depart 13.55 / arrive 16.05 to Delhi. On arrival transfer to hotel for wash/change till 9 pm. Late night transfer to International airport.

PRICE: \$1710 per person based on min 2 people; \$1645 per person based on 4 people, single room supplement: \$570

Plus Airfare: (exact price TBD when booked) Amritsar–Bagdogra \$165 & Bagdogra – Delhi \$134

Includes:

Accommodation with breakfast

2 nights Darjeeling at The Elgin <https://www.elginhotels.com/darjeeling.php>

1 night Pelling at Elgin Mount Pandim <http://elginhotels.com/pelling.php>

1 night Gangtok at Hotel Elgin Norkhill <https://www.elginhotels.com/gangtok.php>

1 night Siliguri at Hotel Sinclairs <https://www.sinclairshotels.com/siliguri>

Wash & Change room in Delhi till 9 pm on last day (price adjusted with main tour)

Arrival and departure transfers & land transport in air conditioned Toyota Innova as per itinerary

Accompanying Professional guide from Bagdogra airport to Bagdogra airport

Entrances in Sikkim and Darjeeling as per itinerary.

Toy Train Tickets

Bottled water in the vehicle (2 litter bottles per day per person)

GST 5%

Does Not Include: International flight, insurance, visa, tips, portage, meals other than mentioned, still camera fees, expenditure of personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, drinks.