

## Sikkim & Darjeeling



Located in the foothills of the mighty Himalayas, Sikkim is a north-eastern state in the vast subcontinent of India. Almost the entirety of Sikkim is in a hilly topography surrounded by the snow-capped mountain ranges of the Himalayas.

Sikkim is abundant in mountain streams, mysterious river valleys, lush green meadows, several crystal clear lakes and hot springs. Sikkim contains a number of high-altitude passes which form a connection between Indian and Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. The magnificent view of the splendid peak of the Kanchenjunga is one of the main reasons why Sikkim is a place frequently visited by tourists. Divided into 4 zones, (namely, North, South, East and West) Sikkim has a wide range of offbeat and beautiful places for tourists to cherish.

From picturesque mountains and dense forests to quaint hamlets, Sikkim has an enthralling world of welcoming, socialite folks, striking flora and fauna, marvellous panoramas and tranquil monasteries and museums. With places such as Gangtok, the Tsomgo Lake, Yumthang Valley, Gurudongmar lake, Ribbon road, and others, Sikkim has become one of the most sought after tourist destinations over the past years.





### **Darjeeling:**

Well known as the 'Queen of Hills' it is one of the most famed hill stations in the World, surrounded by the snow covered Himalayan peaks, majestic pines, lush green tea bushes and shimmering lakes will surely captivate your attention. It is truly a trekker's paradise. Darjeeling is a place with stunning beauty and breathtaking views. Listed under the World heritage Site by UNESCO, the 96 km long Toy train service is quite famous in Darjeeling. There are more attractions like Himalayan Zoological Park, Bastasia Loop, Tiger hill, Shingamari Rope-way(world's 1st) , Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (Toy Train), quaint monasteries, Lloyd's Botanical Garden, Monasteries and of course the world famous Darjeeling tea Gardens.



Mercury Tour Operator provides tourists with the Best Sikkim & Darjeeling tours at nominal rates.

### **How to reach:**

#### **Air**

The closest operational airport to Sikkim is Bagdogra Airport, near the town of Siliguri in West Bengal. The airport is about 124 km away from Gangtok.

#### **Rail**

The closest major railway stations are Siliguri and New Jalpaiguri in neighbouring West Bengal

#### **Road**

National Highway 31A and National Highway 31 link Siliguri to Gangtok. Sikkim National Transport runs bus and truck services. Privately run bus, tourist taxi and jeep services operate throughout Sikkim, and also connect it to Siliguri. A branch of the highway. Sikkim are connected to the hill stations of



Kalimpong and Darjeeling in northern West Bengal. The state is furthermore connected to Tibet by the mountain pass of Nathu La.

### **Places of attraction in North Sikkim**

**Singhik** is situated four kilometers away from Mangan towards the north. It has few shops on the roadside and a junior high school. The view point lies just on the road side from where is seen a very picturesque view of mount Silnoulchu . Right downwards from the viewpoint is seen the confluence of River Teesta and River Kanaka. Other surrounding places too look very beautiful from the viewpoint.

**Lachung** The village, spread out on either side of Lachung Chu, has managed to retain its unique culture and tradition. The Lachung Monastery on the slope opposite to the highway is a focal point of all religious function of the local inhabitants. Lachung lies on the way to Yumthang Valley as we move from Gangtok.

### **Yumthang**

Situated at an altitude of 12000 ft., Yumthang is a valley between the snow clad hills all around. The route to Yumthang from Lachung- adjoining the Singba Forest Reserve has a very picturesque landscape and is lined with rhododendrons that bloom in different colour. The natural scenic beauty around Yumthang, look very much similar to that of Switzerland. The valley has a grassy plane area in the middle, a river on the side and a forest Dak Bunglo (Guest House), surrounded all sides by snow clad mountains. Before entering the valley a small pedestrian road goes through a small bridge right way which connects the Yumthang Hot Spring.





**Lachen** is situated at an altitude of 2750 mts. and about 6 hrs. drive from Gangtok. The Lachen Monastery located on a top of the village commands a panoramic view of the surrounding hills and country side. Resorts, Hotels, and lodges are available for accommodation.

**Guru-Dongmar** Lake is considered as one of the sacred lakes of this State both by the Buddhist and the Hindus. The lake remains milky in colour through out, and it is believed that Guru Padmasambhava had touched the lake whilst he visited Tibet from this area.



### **Places of attraction in South Sikkim**

#### **Namchi :**

It is a famous tourist place and popular for 135 feet statue of Lord Padmasambhava in Samdruptse and Chardham.

**Ravangla** At the base of Menam Hill is Ravangla, a small township and transit to various tourist destinations in South and West Sikkim. It is also an upcoming tourist spot, and transit point for trekkers to Menam Hill and Borong. There are accommodation facilities and numerous short nature trails. A trek down to the sacred cave 'Shar Chok Bephu', one of the four holiest caves in Sikkim, would be a memorable experience.



### **Borong :**

Facing the snow-capped mountains is Borong, motorable from Ravangla or a trek via Menam. A picturesque village, its beautiful landscape and magnificent view is also host to the hot spring, 'Borong TsaChu1. The trek trail, originating from Namchi or Damthang to Tendong - Ravangla -Menam - Borong (5-6 days) is one of the most interesting trials scaling all the hill tops along the route. The trek can continue to Tashiding or terminate at Borong and drive back to Ravangla.

### **Places of attraction in East Sikkim**

#### **Gangtok:**

It was an important trade centre between the British and Tibet during the 19th century. Gangtok was made the capital of Sikkim in 1894. Gangtok is famous for its natural beauty and culture. Gangtok is the nerve center of many tourist spots around this small and beautiful state of Sikkim. There are plenty of hotels to match different budgets and local taxis will take you around Gangtok and far places.



#### **Tsomgo Lake(Changu):**

It literally means the "source of the Lake in the Bhutia language. Just about 40km away from Gangtok, the capital of State. This serene lake is situated at an altitude of 3,780 mtrs. The lake is about 1 km long, oval in shape, 15mtrs deep and is considered sacred by the local people. This placid lake remains frozen during the winter months upto mid-May. Between May and August, it is possible to see a variety of flowres bloom, including the rhododendrons, various species of primulas, blue and yellow poppies, iris, etc. It is also an ideal habitat of the Red Panda and various species of birds. Open for both the foreign and Indian nationals. Foreign visitors have to be in a group of 2 or more and have to apply for the visitors permit through a registered Travel agency.



### **Baba Mandir**

Further 10kms from Tsongo Lake on the way to Nathu-la - Jelepala pass lays the legendary Baba Mandir at an altitude of over 13,000 feet. It was built in memory of a soldier in the 23rd Punjab Regiment, who drowned in a stream near the spot. Legend says he later appeared in a dream to one of his colleagues where he requested that a temple be built in his memory. Though long dead, people believe that the soldier stands guard over them. It is said that his crisply ironed uniforms are mysteriously wrinkled at the end of the day. The most interesting part is that the Govt. has approved this legend and Harvajan Singh enjoys salary increment, promotion and even holidays. His salary is sent home to Punjab and once a year, he goes on leave to his home. A soldier of the regiment accompanies his uniform in the train to his hometown. People believe that by placing their slippers and a bottle of water here, they are cured of backaches.



**Kupup** is situated at the height at of 13,025 from the sea level. It is famous for Yak Golf Course in East Sikkim do features in Guinness Book of World Records on 10 October, 2006.

**Menmecho Lake** located in between Tukla Valley and Kupup. Menmecho Lake is the source of river Rongpo Chu ( in local language chu meaning river), one of the tributaries of river Teesta. It is a stunningly beautiful lake with snow cover from early winter to late spring. It is surrounded by a rich, varied forest and some rather interesting rock formations. Going near to Menmecho Lake is prohibited for tourists. It can be viewd from above and on the motorable road. Menmecho Lake is famous for trout.

**Gnathang** is one of the beautiful villiage in east sikkim.It is located at the height of about 12700 feet



above the sea level. It takes around 3 hours to reach Gnathang by roads from the capital of Sikkim, i.e. Gangtok, via Tshong Lake. We can take another way to reach Gnathang via Rongli from Gangtok, but it takes almost 7 hours. Despite its natural beauty, Gnathang has some historical importance. There is a century-old British War Memorial at Gnathang. There are around 15 graveyards in the War Memorial of those soldiers representing the British Expeditionary Force that fought a war against the Tibetan Army in 1888 at Gnathang. What is more important is that the impact of the defeat of the Tibetan Army in Gnathang resulted in the transfer of administrative power of Sikkim to the hands of the British. We shall have more details of the Sikkim Expedition of 1888 in a few days.

### **Lungthung.:**

The scenic beauty of Lungthung is unparalleled and the view from Lungthung is very picturesque and beautiful with Kanchenjunga glittering on one side and a zig-zag road on the other side. Lungthung is located at about 13,000 ft above the sea level and it takes around 1 hour from Zuluk to reach Lungthung. The sunrise from Lungthung is beautiful and the view is fabulous. The beauty of the place is different during different seasons. In Monsoon, the entire stretch is lush green with clouds floating all over. In winters, the entire area is covered in snow and in the month of October and November, the view is the best and fabulous. It is the habitat of rare species of the Great Red Panda, which is the National Animal of Sikkim. As good luck would have it, visitors may chance upon some of these species. The site offers a home to different species of pheasants such as monal pheasant, khaleez pheasant and blood pheasant. Along with this, tourists can also spot the red panda, the national animal of Sikkim, at this site. Tourists can also explore the famous Luxmi Chawk, which lies in the proximity of Lungthung.

**Aritar**, a region in East Sikkim of India under Rongli Sub-Division, is known for its natural and landscaped beauty. It is located on the edge of the Himalayas and can be reached in about four hours' drive from Gangtok via either Pakyong or Rangpo. Isolated from the rest of the state, on the far eastern border of Sikkim and bounded by Mt. Kanchenjunga, the region is characterized by lush forest, mountains and rivers. The Aritar Lake (Ghati-Tso) is a nearby attraction, as are traditional villages and monasteries such as Lingsay. Visitors may also stay in a British-built bungalow of 1895 located half km below the lake. Places of interest like Lampokhri, Dak Bungalow, Aritar Gumpa, Parbateyswar Shivalaya Mandir.

### **Places of attraction in West Sikkim**



**Pelling** in Sikkim is a placid travel destination, situated at an altitude of 6,800 ft from the sea level. Pelling Sikkim, which is one of the most beautiful places to visit in Sikkim, attracts most of the visitors for its glorious history, nature and culture of the state. Pelling Sikkim's, laid back, scenic, but rapidly swelling hamlet is famous for the magnificent view of the snow-capped mountains of Kanchenjunga. Pelling in Sikkim is an ideal getaway for tourists as its vicinity has numerous waterfalls, soft trek routes, villages and soothing atmosphere for all discerning. High above the forest covered hills, in an amphitheater of cloud, snow and rock.



### **Pemayangtse Monastery**

The Monastery, located on a hill top at an altitude of 6840 ft. commands a magnificent panoramic view of the Himalayan ranges and the surrounding hills and country- side. This is one of the oldest monasteries of the Nyingmapa sect of Mahanaya Buddhism, and was built by Lhatsun Chenpo during the reign of the 3rd Chogyal, Chagdor Namgyal in the 17th century. This monastery is about 6 kms from Gyalsing, the West district headquarters.





**Yuksam** This was the first capital of Sikkim, where according to the historical records; the first Chogyal of the Kingdom of Sikkim was consecrated in 1641 AD by three learned lamas. The evidence of the consecration ceremony is still intact in Norbugang Chorten in the form of stone seats and a foot prints of the Head Lama on a stone. Since the history of the State began from this place, these areas are now considered sacred by the people of Sikkim. Yuksam is served by all weather roads from Pemayangtse, which is at a distance of 32 kms from Yuksam. The trek to Dzongri and to the base camp of the famous Mt Kanchenjunga begins here. Several categories of accommodation are available in Yuksam for those desiring to spend a few days there.

**Rinchenpong** is located in West Sikkim. it offers an interesting mix of nature and history. Rinchenpong not only offers great views of Kanchenjunga and its sister peaks but also houses an ancient monastery containing a rare idol of Buddha in Yub – yum position was constructed in 1717.



### Places of Interest in Darjeeling

**Himalayan Railway** (toy train) It is the first, and stills the most outstanding example of a hill passenger Railway. While Darjeeling was growing, Rowland Macdonald Stephenson promoted East Indian Railway Co. (EIR).





### **Darjeeling Zoo**

Located adjacent to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. It is a high altitude wild life park and a new home for the Siberian Tiger, Himalayan Black Deer, Deer Panda, Llama and birds. It is open from 8 am to 4 pm.

**The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute** is on the West Jawahar road. The institute runs courses for training mountaineers as well as has the very good collection of mountaineering equipments which have been used in various mountaineering expeditions and other wise. Specimens of Himalayan flora and fauna are also kept here. The record of attempts made to conquer Mt. Everest has been kept in the Mt. Everest Museum. The institute also screens short films on mountaineering. You can also view the Himalayan peaks through the Zeiss Telescope given to the Nepalese Maharaja by Hitler. Sherpa Tenzing Norgay was the Director of this institute for many years and he was cremated near the institute after his death in 1986. Near the institute is Srabri which gives a very good view of the Single valley and the Kanchenjunga range. One can sit at Srabri and feel the cool breeze from the valley.



### **Ghoom Monastery**

A typical Tibetan Monastery, situated about 8 k.m. from the town just below Hill Cart Road and the railway station near Ghoom. This is probably the most famous monastery in Darjeeling. It enshrines of the Maitryee Buddha (the coming Buddha) - 15 feet tall. Foreign tourists are allowed to enter.

### **Tiger Hill Sunrise Point:**

Situated at an altitude of 2590 mt. (8,482 ft.) and 11 km from the town, the Tiger Hill has earned international fame for the fabulous view of the Sunrise over "Kanchenjunga" and the great Eastern Himalayan peaks that can be seen from here. On a clear day even Mt. Everest is visible. The golden glow



of the rising Sun changes the colour of the snow capped peaks to crimson, pink and shining gold as one watches from the observation desk.

### **Batasia loop:**

It is about 5 km from Darjeeling and 3 km from Ghoom. This railway loop is a marvelous feat of engineering. It is delightful to see the trains as it winds its way round the loop. It is a pleasant and delightful descent from Ghoom - highest railway station in the world.

**Mirik Lake** is the biggest natural lake in West Bengal. Original name of the lake is Sumendu lake and this is the main tourist attraction. Most people today know this lake as Mirik Lake. Some people say that the lake was named after a fish named Mrigal found here. But today there is no such evidence for this. There is an arching footbridge named Indreni Pull (Rainbow Bridge) over the lake. Length of this bridge is about 80 meters. You can enjoy pedal boating here.



### **Kurseong:**

Land of the White Orchids is 47 KM from Siliguri is famous for its pleasant weather throughout the year. Eagle's Craig, Deer Park or Dow Hill Park, The Kholas (Water Falls – Springs) are some natural sites to visit here. Temples like The Ambhotia Shiva Temple, Giddapahar Durga Mata Mandir, Jagdish Mandir, St. Paulseak Church, Buddhist Gumpa in Montieviot, Juma Mosque etc. are on the list as well. You may try Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Museum and N S C Bose Institute of Asiatic Studies.

**Kalimpong** is a scenic town located in Darjeeling in West Bengal. It is a hill station in the Lesser Himalayas also called the Mahabharata range. The town is located at an average elevation of 1,250 meters (4,101 ft) above sea level. In earlier times, Kalimpong has played the role of a gateway of trade



between Tibet and India, which was closed after the war between India and China, and China's annexation of Tibet. There are many things about Kalimpong which makes it perfect for holidays. Kalimpong offers panoramic views of the great Himalayan ranges and of the Kanchenjunga peak. The best thing every traveler feels about visiting Kalimpong is quiet atmosphere and the peaceful ambience.



**Lava(2138 m)** is a small hamlet situated 34 kilometres (21 mi) east of the town of Kalimpong via Algarah in Darjeeling district. It is one of the few places in West Bengal to receive snow in winter. It is the entry point to the Neora Valley National Park from Kalimpong. The route to Lava is scenic with the change in vegetation from tropical deciduous to the wet alpine trees of fir, pine and birch. The idyllic verdant forests are an ideal spot for picnicking, trekking and bird-watching and other peripatetic activities. The road is untouched by modern life and its inhabitants are still living as they have for centuries. Loleygaon is a village located at a distance of 12 km from Lava lying at an altitude of 5,500 ft in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal. From Loleygaon, offers a panoramic view of the Kanchenjunga. A spectacular sunrise can be viewed from **Jhandi Dara**.





**Rishop** is a Himalayan hamlet in West Bengal. 2591 m above sea-level, it's a nice quaint village away from city crowds, with picturesque views of snow-capped mountains. The sun plays vermilion through the day. At night the big sky seems to come closer. Beneath the sky the twinkling lights of Gangtok & Pedong are similar to the twinkling stars above. Tourists are attracted by the natural beauty of Neora Valley National Park (Sikkim) & Tiffindara. Both are enjoyed through trekking route which is a deep silent forest of pine, birch, fir & orchids with some soothing path following the chirps.



**Sillery Gaon**, a pristine Himalayan village nestled at an altitude of 6000 ft. is an ideal romantic escape. With only 25 families residing in this picture-perfect destination, Sillery Gaon offers a spectacular view of Mt. Kanchenjunga touching and its allied peaks. The entire ambiance of the place is shrouded with tranquility, only interrupted by the chirping of birds. The pine trees admiring this serene village is nowadays being lovingly called New Darjeeling nowadays. Sillery Gaon is located 96 km from New Jalpaiguri via Kalimpong.





**Echey Gaon** is an Organic Village Tourism spot, about 15 km. from Kalimpong at a height of 5,800 ft. is emerging as a new destination for nature-lovers who want to spend few days in the lap of Himalaya. A truly village atmosphere with panoramic view of mountains with the cheerful simple village people. Kanchenjunga range could be seen clearly from dawn to dusk from here. From NJP station it will take 3 hours to reach ECHEY GAON (ICHEY GAON) by a car, in Kalimpong-Ramdura-Rangpo route. Temperature in winter varies from 2 - 8 degree celsius.

