



Darjeeling Singalila Trek & Varanasi

TOUR INFORMATION

Activity: Trekking & Walking

Tour Duration: 14 Days

Min Age For Trips: 16+



INCLUSIONS

- 7 Nights Hotel, 5 Nights Camping
- 13 Breakfasts, 8 Lunches & 7 Dinners
- Fully Supported Trekking
- Flight Delhi - Bagdogra and Varanasi - Delhi Return

This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

DARJEELING & THE SINGALILA TREK

Darjeeling is located in Northwest Bengal, in the Himalayan foothills. Famous for its worldrenowned tea, colonial era-charm and the UNESCO World Heritage Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (Toy Train). A blend of Nepali, Tibetan, Bhutanese and Bengali influences, all reflected in its food, festivals and traditions. Highlights are the panoramic views of Kanchenjunga (the world's third highest mountain), the Batasia Loop, the Ghoom Monastery and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. The SINGALILA Ridge is a north-south mountain ridge running along the India- Nepal border in the Eastern Himalayas, running through West Bengal (Darjeeling district) and Sikkim. Two of West Bengal's highest peaks lie on this ridge: Sandakphu (3,636m) and Phalut (3600m).

The ridge is enclosed in Singalila National Park which protects diverse Himalayan forests, wildlife and flora. In clear weather along the ridge, you can see high peaks such as Lhotse, Makalu, Kanchenjunga and Everest.

THE KRISHNAMURTI CENTRE, VARANASI

The Rajghat Education Centre (REC) is based on the vision of J. Krishnamurti and inspired by the statements he made about his teachings. It was established in 1928 by Krishnamurti, overlooking the confluence of the rivers Varuna and Ganga, on the outskirts of the pilgrimage city of Varanasi. The Centre consists of The Rajghat Besant School, Vasanta College for Women, Krishnamurti Study Centre and Rural units that are engaged in community services. "This is a place of learning and austere living with inward discipline, and work, without guru, without leader, and without a system of meditation or working; a place for all serious people who have left behind them their nationality, their sectarian beliefs and all the other things that divide human beings."

READ MORE: <https://www.rajghatbesantschool.org>

The Unit for Women Empowerment (UWE) has been working to empower rural women for the past three decades. It was established in 1994 as an initiative to provide training to women from the neighbouring villages of Rajghat. Over time, the unit flourished by offering new livelihood opportunities. Women come to learn new skills, stitch various items, and earn an income which they use to support their families, pursue education and meet personal needs.

"It is a story of unwavering commitment to communities, women and their empowerment." The UWE is a Krishnamurti Foundation of India initiative and is part of the rural centre in Sarai Mohana village. The centre includes Sanjivan hospital, a dairy farm, and the Achyut Patwardhan School, all dedicated to serving the rural community. "The UWE is an effort to transform the lives of women from underprivileged social backgrounds, fostering financial autonomy and decision-making power among women in their lives." J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986) is widely regarded as one of the greatest thinkers and religious teachers of all time. He spoke throughout the world to large audiences and to individuals, including writers, scientists, philosophers and educators, about the need for a radical change in mankind. Krishnamurti was concerned with all humanity and stated repeatedly that he held no nationality or belief and belonged to no particular group or culture. In the latter part of his life, he travelled mainly between the schools he had founded in India, Britain and the United States, which educate for the total understanding of man and the art of living. He stressed that only this profound understanding can create a new generation that will live in peace.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival Delhi

Arrive Delhi early morning, flight to Bagdogra and drive to Darjeeling. The drive to Darjeeling will take us about 3hrs (70 Kms). Today, Darjeeling is a bustling town but the Mall still retains Victorian charm, evening walk around the Mall and enjoy the Diwali celebrations at this time of the year!

Accommodation: HOTEL

Day 2: In Darjeeling

Free day in Darjeeling, visiting the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. There are interesting displays and photographs from some of the early Everest climbs.

Accommodation: HOTEL

Meal: Breakfast

Day 3: Ride the toy train; drive to Rimbik and trek to Manedara - 8,040ft (2,450m)

Today we have a 40-minute ride on the toy train to Ghoom (subject to running). The train chugs out of Darjeeling, stopping to take on water and to allow passengers to photograph the Batasia Loop. At Ghoom, we meet our cars and drive for around four hours to Rimbik, the trailhead of our trek at 7,500ft (2,286m). We have a 45-minute gentle uphill walk through magnificent rhododendron forests (a blaze of reds in spring) to our camp at Manedara, where we spend our first night under canvas. As we approach the village, we have stunning views of Kabru Dome and Kabru South peaks.

Accommodation: TENTS

Meal: Breakfast & Dinner

Distance covered: 2km

Ascent: 591 ft (180m)

Activity hours: 45 minutes

Day 4: Trek through forest and villages to Gurdum - 7,875ft (2,400m)

Today we start our trek with an easy trail passing small houses and fields. It is about two hours' gradual walk through beautiful forest to Shepi village. We then descend to the Gurdum Khola river, which we cross by bridge and after a steep one-hour climb to Gurdum village, we arrive at our camp for the evening.

Accommodation: TENTS

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Distance covered: 6mi (9km)

Ascent: 1,444ft (440m)

Descent: 1,247ft (380m)

Walking: 3-4 Hours

Day 5: Trek through forest ascending through Sandakhphu to Chandu- 11,715ft (3,570m)

It's a fairly tough but rewarding day as we finish our ascent to the Singalila Ridge. The trail climbs steeply in places until we emerge at a forest clearing. From here, it undulates through rhododendron forest to the ridgetop at Sandakhphu (11,929ft/3,636m), the highest point of our trek. On a clear day, the climb is well worth the effort as we are rewarded with a magnificent Himalayan panorama. The views from here are truly amazing – the towering slopes of Kanchenjunga lie ahead and Everest, Lhotse and Makalu come into view in the distance. After lunch at Sandakhphu, it is a gradual walk on a rough jeep track to our camp at Chandu.

Accommodation: TENTS

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch & dinner

Distance covered: 9mi (14km)

Ascent: 4,888ft (1,490m)

Descent: 919ft (280m)

Walking: 7-8 Hours

**Day 6: Trekking along the Singalila Ridge to Sabargam - sleeping altitude: 11,601ft (3,536m)**

We are now on the Singalila Ridge, the border between Nepal and India, which means at times we are walking in each country. This is a great day for views. The trail undulates, following the ridge through chestnut, oak and silver fir trees with commanding panoramic views of the Himalaya all day. Dwarf rhododendrons and primulas colour the landscape in spring. Tonight, we have a spectacular wild camp at Sabargam. The views from here are sublime and we hope to see a magnificent sunset and sunrise over Kanchenjunga, Everest, Lhotse and Makalu and a whole host of other Himalayan peaks.

Accommodation: TENTS

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Distance covered: 8mi (13km)

Ascent: 1,280ft (390m)

Descent: 1,115ft (340m)

Walking: 4-5 Hours

Day 7: Trek to the end of the Singalila Ridge at Phalut then descend to Samaden -8,135ft (2,480m)

We enjoy a full day of trekking along an undulating trail to the end of the ridge at Phalut, where we descend to Samaden. On a clear day, we get breathtaking views of Kanchenjunga as we continue along the ridge. The Everest range is further away but Kanchenjunga rears up over us. Phalut is at 11,810ft (3,600m) and just behind the lodge there is a viewpoint where Himalayan giants surround us. The trail down to Samaden is glorious and takes us through forests of oak, conifers, pine and rhododendrons, an explosion of colour in spring. We camp tonight in Samaden, a small settlement with excellent views.

Accommodation: TENTS

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Distance covered: 14mi (23km)

Ascent: 1,988ft (606m)

Descent: 4,659ft (1,420m)

Walking: 7-8 Hrs



Day 8: Trek through small settlements to Rimbik & Drive to Darjeeling

Our final trek winds through a collection of small settlements (inhabited by Rais, Sherpas and Tamangs) to Ramman, where terraced fields and villages dot the landscape. We descend along a jeep track to Sri Kholra for lunch, after which we cross a suspension bridge and continue for another

2hr 30min along a road, passing through more villages to Rimbik, a large Sherpa village among the forest landscapes of Singalila National Park. Here we meet our transport and drive to Darjeeling.

Accommodation: HOTEL

Meal: Breakfast & Lunch

Distance covered: 9mi (14km)

Ascent: 2,395ft (730m)

Descent: 3,871ft (1,180m)

Walking: 4 Hrs

Drive: 60 Kms / 3 Hrs

Day 9: Drive to New Jalpaiguri & overnight train to Varanasi

Morning free in Darjeeling and afternoon drive to New Jalpaiguri to board the overnight train for Varanasi, a 700km journey, AC (2A) ticket. Dep. 2035 Overnight in train.

Meal: Breakfast

Day 10: Arrive Varanasi

Arrive Varanasi 0945 hrs, transfer to The Krishnamurti Centre VARANASI

Accommodation: Twin-bedded accommodation

Meal: Breakfast on board the train. Lunch & Dinner at the Study Centre



Day 11: Krishnamurti Study Centre

Twin-bedded accommodation

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12: Krishnamurti Study Centre

Twin-bedded accommodation

Meal: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13: Flight back to Delhi

We leave the Centre and take a flight back to Delhi from Varanasi. The rest of the day is at leisure or sightseeing tours can be arranged in Delhi (paid for locally in Delhi).

Accommodation: Hotel

Meal: Breakfast

Day 14: Depart Delhi

After breakfast, depart Delhi (Checkout Hotel 1200 Hrs).

What is included

- English speaking tour leader throughout.
- English speaking local expert trek Guide.
- English speaking Krishnamurti Varanasi Study Centre facilitator from Day 2 in Bagdogra until departure from Varanasi.
- 3-star hotel accommodation in Darjeeling 3 nights, including Breakfast.
- 3-star hotel accommodation in Delhi one night, including Breakfast.
- Full-service camping - Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner, 5 nights.
- Krishnamurti Study Centre 3 nights, inc Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner.
- Overnight train to Varanasi (2nd AC Sleeper) Breakfast included.
- All tents during trek, including ponies to carry heavy luggage and all camp and cooking equipment.
- Toy train ticket from Darjeeling (subject to operation).
- All transfers and sightseeing by private cars/mini bus.
- Domestic flights: Delhi – Bagdogra on Day 1, Varanasi – Delhi on Day 13.
- All applicable local taxes.

What is not included

- International flights to Delhi.
- Indian Visa.
- Personal travel insurance (including trekking to altitude of 3636m).
- Extra meals in Darjeeling (as detailed in the itinerary).
- Local tips for drivers/hotel staff/guide/Krishnamurti facilitator and trek support team.
- Sleeping bags (3/4 season) and personal trekking gear – see Kit List below.
- Personal expenses such as laundry, mini-bar charges, table drinks etc.
- Optional sightseeing tours in Delhi on final day.

Accommodation

We use simple hotels, all with en-suite facilities. On trek we do camp or stay in home stays, with shared facilities and a larger communal room or tent for meals. In Delhi we stay in a comfortable hotel. A single supplement is available on this trip including camping.

Food

Whilst on trek all meals are included and are prepared by our own cook and served, in Srinagar Dinner and Breakfast is included and served from the kitchen of the houseboat. In Delhi and Leh we provide bed and breakfast option only, this allows you the option of choosing where you would like to eat, which is very much part of the adventure. On trek we eat Indian, Chinese and western food prepared to a surprisingly high standard. There are always several dishes: dhals, vegetables and sometimes meat if fresh chicken or lamb is tracked down. Breakfasts and lunches are varied and appetizing.

Vegetarians are well catered for in India. If you have any other dietary restrictions please let us know when booking.

Above 3000m, the air is thinner, the pressure is lower and there is less oxygen available in the atmosphere. Acclimatisation is the process by which the body adapts to these conditions. The key to acclimatisation is a good itinerary with a gradual initial height gain, walking at a slow and steady pace, and increasing fluid intake – drinking at least 4 litres a day is advisable above 3000m.

Transport

We fly from Delhi to Bagdogra and use jeeps or taxis for the sightseeing round Darjeeling and the journey from the start of the trek and from the end of the trek.

Health and Hygiene

We have an excellent record of staying fit and well in India. The key seems to be our enthusiasm for Indian vegetarian food, (most of India is vegetarian), and care with water, peeling fruit, avoiding salads etc.

Altitude

Above 3000m, the air is thinner, the pressure is lower and there is less oxygen available in the atmosphere. Acclimatisation is the process by which the body adapts to these conditions. The key to acclimatisation is a good itinerary with a gradual initial height gain, walking at a slow and steady pace, and increasing fluid intake – drinking at least 4 litres a day is advisable above 3000m. Many people have some minor side effects from altitude, such as headache, nausea or general lassitude. The optional use of 'Diamox' has proved useful for some people, as this drug can reduce these symptoms. You will be given more information on 'Diamox' with your Final Information, between 8 and 10 weeks before departure.

Tipping

It is custom and practice to tip in India. You should perhaps allow the equivalent of around £60/US\$100/NZ\$125 or so for the whole holiday – tips are usually presented to the crew by the group at the end of the trek if they have done a good job. You may also have some outdoor gear that you are willing to donate at the end of the trek. Try to avoid giving sweets, biscuits, pens or cash to children or anyone who has not rendered a service.

Climate

In Delhi it will be warm around 30°C, and generally dry during this time of the year. Beyond that it will generally be milder in Darjeeling and surroundings around 20-25°C day time temperatures and on the trek it should mostly be similar a bit cooler during mornings and evenings. Though trips are run but rainfall are always possible in the mountains. At night on the trek, temperatures could drop to 5-10 degrees, so suitable clothing is required.

Indian Visas

A full passport is required to apply for the Indian visa, with a validity of at least 6 months beyond the intended duration of stay in the country. It is the client's responsibility to complete all the application procedures and obtain their visas before the intended date of departure. A simplified facility of applying for an eVisa is now available to British passport holders, this will entitle the applicants to a 60 day tourist visa, for more details please log on to the official website of Indian Government <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/> Alternatively UK passport holders can apply themselves for Indian Visa through India High Commissions Visa service VFS by logging on to <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/>. Current visa fee for British passport holders

