



Sikkim – Jewel of the Himalayas

Lodge/ teahouse trek

No of days: 16

Graded: Moderately strenuous

Your Adventure

This trek takes you into the pristine wilderness of Sikkim, through lush valleys with beautiful oak, rhododendron and magnolia forests, fast flowing rivers, terraced hills, to the high alpine lakes and glaciers, and snow covered peaks around Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world (8 586 m). Kangchenjunga means the “Five Treasures of the Great Snows”. According to the Sikkimese belief it is the repository of minerals, grains, salt, weapons and Holy Scriptures. Since Kangchenjunga is regarded a “holy” mountain most of the climbers who have summated it, has therefore in respect never been standing on the actual summit but just a meter away.

Along with the breathtaking views of the Himalayas, this adventure also gives you a total experience of Sikkim's diversities in terms of culture, traditions and religion as well as an exploration of flora and fauna. Thus it is called the “Jewel of the Himalayas”.

Sikkim at a glance: Longitude: 88E
Latitude: 27 N
Population: 540, 493
Capital: Gangtok
Area: 7, 096 km²



Summary

Trek Distance:	Approx. 92 km
Maximum altitude:	4 942 m Goechala
In / Out:	Bagdogra

Grading

This trek is graded III+ which is equivalent to moderately strenuous walks in moderately high altitude, between 4 000m to 5 000m. The walks can be 5 to 7 hours each day. The trail can sometimes be rough and difficult e.g. while walking on high stony steps, and there can be long and steep uphill and downhill.

At higher altitude, during nighttime, the temperature can get down to min of -2C during early autumn and late spring and it can get down to min of -8C to -10C during mid winter.

You don't need to be marathon-fit but you will enjoy it more if you are in reasonably good physical condition. We suggest you to undergo physical training at least 3 times a week for 2 months before starting your trek.

Itinerary

- Day 1:** Arrive Bagdogra/ Drive to Darjeeling (2100m)/ Transfer to Hotel/ welcome dinner
- Day 2:** Half-day sightseeing, lunch and trek briefing.
- Day 3:** Drive to Pelling / overnight hotel
- Day 4:** Sightseeing in Pelling/ Transfer to Yuksom (1768m)
- Day 5:** Trek to Bakhim (2744m)
- Day 6:** Trek to Phedang (3760m)
- Day 7:** Trek to Dzongri (4320m)
- Day 8:** Rest and Acclimatization
- Day 9:** Trek to Thangsing (3780m)
- Day 10:** Trek to Samiti Lake (4308m)
- Day 11:** Full day excursion to Goechala (4942m) and back to Thangsing
- Day 12:** Trek to Tshoka (3049m)
- Day 13:** Trek to Yuksom (1768m)
- Day 14:** Drive to Gangtok (1860m)
- Day 15:** Full day sight seeing in and around Gangtok
- Day 16:** Drive to Bagdogra.

Please Note that the above itinerary is only a guide and that it could change. A lot of things have to be taken into account like weather, general walking pace of the group, mountain safety etc. Your group leader can change the schedule if necessary with prior notice to you, keeping safety first in mind.



Your Adventure

Day 1 – Arrival to Bagdogra

Once you reach Bagdogra airport and finish with the immigration and custom formalities, be prepared to confront the confusion outside the airport, which is common in most of the South Asian countries. As you walk out of the Exit door into the passenger pick up area you will see hundreds of people with different sign boards in their hands, taxi drivers looking for fares, hotel touts looking for customers and porters trying to help with the luggage for tips. Please remain calm and do not walk out of the restricted area into the crowd straight away. Remain there and try to find the Questropix Adventure sign board. Once you spot it walk straight to the signboard and identify yourself. From here we will take care of you. The same is applied if you are to join us from Kakarivitta bus terminus.

From either Bagdogra or Kakarivitta bus terminus, it is a three and a half hours drive to Darjeeling. We drive alongside tea gardens, crisscrossing the tracks of the famous Toy Train as we wind up the mountains. On arrival to Darjeeling you will be checked in to your hotel and briefed about your activities and "do's and don'ts" while your stay in Darjeeling.

In the evening all the group members will be asked to meet at the lobby where you will have to fill in the application form for the permit and we will also collect your passport and air tickets for reconfirming your onward flight. All these documents will be held in Questropix Adventure safe and will be returned to you after your trek. Then we will go for a traditional Indian dinner at Darjeeling's finest restaurant to end the day.

Day 2 - Sightseeing and Trek briefing

After breakfast you will be taken for a half-day sightseeing tour around Darjeeling. We will visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, the Snow Leopard Breeding Center, Tibetan Self Help Center, and Ghoom Monastery on a Toy train. We will end our sightseeing with a nice lunch. After our lunch we will return to the hotel and your Group leader will give you your trek briefing and issue you your 'trek pack' consisting of a duffel bag, down jacket, sleeping bag, inner liner for your sleeping bag, and rain poncho. Your afternoon is free for you to do your packing and purchasing your last minute items for your trek.

Day 3 - Drive to Pelling (7 hrs)

We will have an early start from Darjeeling, driving past the tea gardens, winding along the mountainsides, and then down to cross the Rungeet River into Sikkim. We arrive to Pelling by late afternoon and stay overnight in hotel.

Day 4 - Sightseeing in Pelling and drive to Yuksom

In the morning we visit the famous Pemayangtse Monastery and Sanghu Cholling Monastery, which are the most beautiful and sacred Monasteries of Sikkim. After Lunch we drive to Yuksom (1768 m). Yuksom was the first Capital of Sikkim and it was here that the Holy Lamas consecrated the first Chogyal (King) in 1642. Here we meet our trekking staff who has set up a nice camp where we spend the night.

Day 5 - Trek to Bakhim (5-6 hrs)

We begin our trek following the Rathong river gorge, into the pristine wilderness, through mixed forest with magnolias, rhododendrons, spruce, oak and varieties of orchids. After an hour walking we cross the Paha Khola suspension bridge (1733m). After about 2 hours walking, we stop for lunch. After lunch we cross the Prek Chu River and ascend steeply for about 3 hrs to arrive at Bakhim. Overnight Camping.

Day 6 - Trek to Phedang (4-5 hrs)

We start our trek with a 3 km moderate climb through yak and sheep grazing pastures of the picturesque village of Tshoka. After Tshoka the trail is fairly steep uphill through a rhododendron forest and we continue along a wide path to Phedang. Overnight camping.

Day 7 - Trek to Dzongri (3-4 hrs)

Today is a fairly short day. We continue walking uphill and you will notice the forest getting thinner and the trees getting shorter in height. Upon arrival at Dzongri you get a spectacular view of Pandim, Koktang, Rathong, Kabru and Kangchenjunga. Overnight camping.

Day 8 - Rest and acclimatization

We will utilize this day exploring the area for acclimatization until lunchtime. Then you are free to either rest or walk around the local areas. Overnight camping.

Day 9 - Trek to Thangsing (5-6 hrs)

We start our walk with a gradual climb, for about 2 km, over a ridge from where we can see breathtaking views of the Prek Chu Valley, and views Mt. Kangchenjunga and Mt. Pandim at the far side of the valley. We then descend, at first traversing down towards Pandim on the far side of the Valley, and then dropping steeply down on a good path through rhododendron forest to the Prek Chu River at 3 749m for lunch. After lunch we ascend gradually along the Onglangthang Valley, through pinewoods to a grassy campsite at Thangsing. Overnight camping.

Day 10 - Trek to Samiti Lake (3 hrs)

A gentle uphill, following the Prek Chu River through the Onglangthang Valley leads you to the edge of the terminal moraine of the ancient glacier. After traversing through the rocky terrain we reach Samiti Lake, a beautiful emerald green, holy lake perched below Mt. Pandim. Overnight camping.



Day 11 - Trek to Goechala and return to Thangsing (7-8 hrs)

We start early in the morning, following the moraine steeply up the valley and then descending to the sandy bed of an empty lake. Then we ascend another high terminal moraine of Goecha glacier. From here we hike up to a slope and then a well trodden path to Goecha la pass, from where, the views of Kangchenjunga and Talung glacier are simply breathtaking. Then we trek back to Thangsing. Overnight camping.

Day 12 - Trek to Tshoka (6-7 hrs)

We leave the Onglanghang Valley and descend to Kok Churong to reach Tshoka after a long day hike. Overnight camping.

Day 13 - Trek to Yuksom (6-7 hrs)

We retrace our footsteps to Yuksom where we end our trek. This will be our last evening with the trekking staff. We end our trek with a farewell party. Overnight camping.

Day 14 - Drive to Gangtok (7 hrs)

Overnight in hotel.

Day 15 - Full day sightseeing in and around Gangtok.

In the morning we drive 24 km through beautiful countryside, to Rumtek Monastery. Rumtek is the seat of the Karmapa Lama, who heads the Kagyopa sect of Buddhism. In the afternoon we visit Dul-Dul Chorten, Reseach Instituion of Tibetology. Overnight in hotel.

Day 16 - Departure.

A 3 1/2 hrs drive along the Teesta River Valley to Bagdogra to catch your onward flight.

PLEASE NOTE that once you arrive to your hotel in Darjeeling your group leader will time to time update you with the timings and description of your activities. On your trek, every evening, after dinner, your group leader will describe in detail about your next day trek and also advise you regarding which clothes and equipment you need to carry in your day pack for the day.



A Day on Your Trek

Although each day is different, considering the weather, general pace of the group and length of the days walk, in general your day begins with a wake up tea at around 6:30 in the morning. You will then be provided with a bowl of warm water for washing. Then you will need to pack your duffel bag and your daypack and come to the dining tent for breakfast.

After breakfast we will hit the trail and usually walk for about 3 to 4 hrs before we stop for lunch. We will give you about an hour and a half rest during lunch, which will also give enough time for the staff to have their lunch and pack. Usually after 3 to 4 hrs of walking we finish the days walk by 4 PM. Tea/ Coffee and snacks will be served on arrival to the camp. Your group leader will often organize side trips in the afternoon. Your dinner will be served around 7 PM.



High Altitude

On this trek you will be going up to 4 942 m, so it is very important to understand the affects of altitude. The greatest provocation is going too high too fast. Questropix itinerary has been carefully designed to minimize the effects of altitude. We ascend slowly and surely allowing enough time for safe acclimatization. Headaches and breathlessness are common at altitude which in itself is nothing to worry about. In rare cases, this may worsen to Acute Mountain sickness (AMS), so a close watch is kept on all trekkers by the group leader who is trained to recognize the symptoms of AMS which are severe headaches, nausea, lethargy, loss of appetite serious breathlessness even at rest. If any trekkers show such signs they will be descended to relatively lower and safer altitude. The Group Leader's decision on evacuating such person to a safe altitude is final.

Do not medicate yourself without first informing your group leader. Going to altitude slowly with adequate rest and adequate intake of fluid (3 to 4 litres per day), you will most likely have no problems apart from breathlessness on hills which is completely normal as the percentage of Oxygen in the air is relatively lower to that at sea level. The most important thing is not to worry about altitude because our team is there to take care of you.

Staff

Group leader: your most important member of your staff. Our group leaders are highly trained in all aspects of the trek, conservation, first aid specializing on altitude sickness, emergency procedures and have extensive knowledge of the natural history of the area.

Sirdar: His job is to manage and organize staff duties. He is responsible for the actual operation of the trek.

Sherpas: Their job is to lead your way and distribute equal loads to the porters.

Porters: They are responsible to transport your duffle bags and their job finishes once they reach the designated lodge. Our porters are provided with Gore-Tex suits, trekking boots, gloves, hats, socks, snow gaiters and snow goggles. Most importantly, we regulate them on a 25 kg carrying which no other company does. Our clients can therefore feel comfortable knowing that our porters are working in a good humane condition. During the trek you can see porters carrying 60-70 kg and sometimes even more than 100 kg!!)



Weather

Oct/Nov and March/April

On the trek at lower altitude (2500m to 3500m) during daytime the Max temp can be around 22C to 28C and the Min temp can be 8C to 15C

At higher altitude (3500m to 5500m) the daytime Max temp can be between 17C to 22C and Min temp can be between -4C to 8C

Dec to end of Feb

On the trek at lower altitude (2500m to 3500m) during daytime the Max temp can be around 15C to 20C and the Min temp can be 2C to - 8C

At higher altitude (3500m to 5500m) the daytime Max temp can be between 12C to 18C and Min temp can be between -4C to -20C

Please note that this is just general information and it could vary marginally.

Our services

- All internal transportation, in private vehicle.
- Services of English- or/and Swedish-speaking guide, porter's and Sherpa's assistance
- Accommodation on full board, in tourist class hotels on twin share basis for 2 nights in Darjeeling, 1 night in Pelling, and 2 nights in Gangtok.
- Welcome dinner.
- Half day sightseeing in Darjeeling with lunch.
- Half day sightseeing in Pelling.
- Full day sightseeing in Gangtok.
- Use of a personal trek pack consisting of a duffel bag, T-shirt, down jacket, rainponcho, sleeping bag and inner liners for the sleeping bag.
- All camping and kitchen facilities.
- All meals in Hotel while in Darjeeling, Pelling and Gangtok and all meals on trek.
- Boiled and treated water 4 times a day.
- All accommodations in tents on twin share, while on trek.
- All trekking permits and National Park fees as applicable
- Staff insurance, tourist service fee and all taxes applicable as per state law.

Not Included

- Personal accident and rescue insurance. You must provide your own rescue insurance
- Mineral water, beer, soft drinks and extra tea/coffee outside of normal meal times
- Private room accommodation in unless a single supplements is paid.
- Optional tips to guides, porter
- International airport departure taxes
- Visa costs.

Recommendations for things you should bring

- Water bottle 3 bottles min 1 litre each, should be able to hold hot water
- Day pack medium size 35-40 litres
- Sunglasses
- Duct tape small roll.
- Stuff bags smaller plastic bags to organize you duffle bag
- Money belt
- Toiletries we provide toilet papers
- Towel
- Torch preferably head lamp
- Penknife
- Disposable lighter
- Sewing kit
- Medical kit as per your prescriptions. It should be noted that the group leader will be carrying a first aid kit.

Optional

- Walking sticks
- Cameras
- Knee guard for those with bad knees.

Clothing

- **Trousers:** 1 lightweight for easy walking and 1 warmer for colder days preferable wind/water proof, 1 stretchable running trousers
- **Shorts:** Not too high cut revealing ones
- **T-shirts:** At least 3 or 4
- **Hats:** Sunhat and woollen ones for colder days
- **Gloves:** Woollen and Gore-Tex
- **Thermal underwear:** Light weight tops and trousers, preferably woollen, at least 2 pairs
- **Socks:** At least 4 pairs (both thin and thick woollen ones)
- **Jackets:** 1 fleece and 1 Gore-Tex wind/waterproof. Please note that we provide down jackets.
- **Walking boots:** Preferably waterproof

Healthy and trouble free holiday

There are no compulsory vaccinations required for entering India. However please consult a doctor for vaccination against Typhoid, Meningitis, polio, and hepatitis. If you have special dietary requirements or allergies, please through your agent, give us a list of what you can and can't eat so that we can provide proper food for you.

If you are undergoing a course of prescription medicine, please ensure that you have sufficient supplies for the entire holiday. Some types of drugs including antimalarials have side effects at high altitude; therefore please consult your doctors regarding these drugs. The places you trek are mosquito free but if you are spending some time in other parts of India, you need to take anti malarial medicines.

Insure yourself

We highly recommend you to take a comprehensive Personal Travel Insurance before leaving home. This should cover for your loss of baggage, airline delays, sickness, and accidents. And it should also cover you for Emergency Helicopter Evacuation.

Money Matters

The ideal currency to bring with you is US\$ or Euro in traveller's cheques.

In Darjeeling and Gangtok: Each meal will cost around 4 to 6 US\$.

On trek: you will need around 4 to 5 US\$ per day. This money is for your hot showers, chocolates, soft drinks and beers etc and also for small donations in the monasteries.

Tipping

Although tipping is entirely optional and personal matter the following is recommended as a guideline

In Darjeeling, Pelling and Gangtok: For bellboys, waiters and porters 20 to 30 Indian Rupees

On the trek: At the end of the trek it is a customary to tip the field staff. The recommended amount is 3-4 US\$ depending on group size. The group leader will collect the tip and then split it between the staff and put it in envelopes so that the trekkers can give it to the staff during the "Farwell Ceremonies"



Some Do's and Don'ts

Local people treat visitors as special guests. Although they will never rebuke you publicly for unknowingly offending them, we must consider their culture.

While in Sikkim and Darjeeling please observe the following:

- Full or partial nudity is not accepted.
- Over display of affection between men and women, especially in temples and monasteries are discouraged.
- Please remove your shoes before entering monasteries and temples.
- Never point the soles of your feet at a person or shrine.
- Many Hindu temples are closed to non-Hindus. Please ask before entering.
- Locals walk around the Mani walls and Stupas in a clockwise direction as a respect and they expect you to do the same although it is not compulsory.

ENJOY!

