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Journey to the Himalayan Kingdoms

Duration: 15N/16D

Key Sights: Kolkata - Darjeeling - Pelling - Gangtok - Kalimpong - Pheuntsholing - Thimpu - Punakha - Paro - Kolkata

Day	Program	Mode
Day 1	Arrived Kolkata	By Flight
Day 2	Kolkata	
Day 3	Kolkata – Bagdogra – Darjeeling	By Flight
Day 4	Darjeeling	
Day 5	Darjeeling	
Day 6	Darjeeling – Pelling	By Surface
Day 7	Pelling – Gangtok	By Surface
Day 8	Gangtok	
Day 9	Gangtok – Kalimpong	By Surface
Day 10	Kalimpong – Pheuntsholing	By Surface
Day 11	Pheuntsholing – Thimpu	By Surface
Day 12	Thimpu	
Day 13	Thimpu – Punakha	By Surface
Day 14	Punakha – Paro	By Surface
Day 15	Paro	
Day 16	Paro – Kolkata	By Flight



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Day 1	Arrived Kolkata	By Flight
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You will be met on arrival and transferred to hotel. Overnight stay at Hotel.

Day 2	Kolkata	
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Breakfast at hotel. This morning proceed for the full day city tour - Visit the colourful and bustling flower and vegetable market followed by a boat ride down the Hooghly river. Later continue the tour and visit old Calcutta. This square has many old historic buildings, to name a few - Silver Mint (1824-31) built in Greek style is presently in a dilapidated condition, The Writers Building - designed by Thomas Lyon as a trading house for East India Company in 1780 has 57 sets of identical windows on 3 storeys built like a barrack inside. The Old Mission Church, built by Swedish missionary Johann Kiernander was consecrated in 1770, General Post Office designed by Walter Granville in 1868 has a white dome and Corinthian pillars, The Raj Bhawan, once a residence of British Governors-General and Viceroys, it is now the home of Governor of West Bengal, next to it is the most important Gothic building of Kolkata - the Calcutta High Court, built in 1872.

The Mother Teresa's Home - Mother Teresa came as a Loreto Sister in 1931 to teach in a local school in Kolkata and 19 years later with Pope's permission started her Order of the Missionaries of Charity to serve the destitute. The Nuns of this order always work in pairs and the mission has many Homes, Clinics and Orphanages. Nirmal Hriday (pure heart) was opened in 1952 for the dying among the poorest.

The Pareshnath Jain Temple is an ornate Digambar Jain temple built in central Indian Style in 1867 by a jeweller. The interior is richly decorated in European baroque and Italianate styles with mirrors and Venetian glass mosaics. The gardens have formal geometric flower beds. Belur Math was founded in 1899 by Swami Vivekanand, a disciple of Saint Ramakrishna. It is presently the international headquarters of Ramakrishna Mission and preaches the unity of all religions. Symbolizing the belief of "Math" (monastery) it has Hindu, Christian and Islamic style of architecture.

Later visit the Victoria Memorial - a gift by Lord Curzon to Queen Victoria in honor of her commemoration and as a symbol of her Indian Empire. It has been designed in Italian Renaissance -Mughal style and built in White Marble in 1921 and has many galleries with over 3000 exhibits. At the entrance it has an impressive 'weather vane' in form of a 5mt tall bronze figure of Victory, weighing over 3 tons. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 3	Kolkata – Bagdogra – Darjeeling	By Flight
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Breakfast at Hotel. Morning transfer to airport to board flight to Bagdogra. Arrive Bagdogra and drive to Darjeeling. Darjeeling is one of the most magnificent hill-station in the world. This heavenly retreat is bathed in hues of every shade. The flaming red rhododendrons, the sparkling white magnolias, the miles of undulating hillsides covered with emerald green tea gardens, the exotic forests of Silver fir - all under the blanket of a brilliant azure sky dappled with specks of clouds, compellingly confounds. Check-in at hotel, remaining day at leisure for independent activities. Overnight stay at hotel.



Day 4

Darjeeling

Early morning excursion to Tiger Hill. Situated at an altitude of 2590 metres (8482 ft.) and 13 kms from the town, this spot has earned international fame for the magnificent view of the sunrise over "Kanchenjunga" and the great Eastern Himalayan Mountains. On your way back visit Ghoom Monastery More correctly known as Yogacholing Gumpa, this is probably the most famous monastery in Darjeeling, just below Hill Cart road and the train station near Ghoom. It enshrines an image of the Maitreya Buddha.

Return to hotel for breakfast. Later visit Mountaineering Institute: The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI) was established in Darjeeling, India on 04th Nov 1954 to encourage mountaineering as an organized sport in India. This institute was set up following the successful ascent of the Mount Everest-the highest peak in the world by the local hero Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary on 28th May 1953. Tenzing Norgay was the first director of field training for HMI. Afternoon visit to a nearby tea plantation. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 5

Darjeeling

Breakfast at Hotel. Morning at leisure for independent activities. During the day visit Zoological Park: Established on the 14th Aug 1958, this Zoo was dedicated to the memory of Padmaja Naidu, former Governor of West Bengal on the 21st Nov 1975. Considered as one of the best Zoo in the country, it is the only center that breeds the Tibetan Wolf in captivity. Breeding programmes for the endangered Red Panda, Snow Leopard and the Siberian Tiger are also carried out at PNHZP (Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park). Open on all days except Thursdays and other National Holidays. In the afternoon guided walking tour of Darjeeling. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 6

Darjeeling – Pelling

By Surface

Breakfast at Hotel and later check-out. This morning drive to Pelling, upon arrival check-in at hotel. Later during the day visit the famous 17th century Pemayangtse Monastery. It was planned, designed and founded by Lama Lhatsun Chenpo in 1705, it is one of the oldest and premier monasteries of Sikkim. Originally built by Lhatsun Chenpo as a small Lhakhang, it was subsequently enlarged during the reign of the third Chogyal Chakdor Namgyal. The monastery follows the Nyingma Order of Tibet Buddhism and controls all other monasteries of that Order in Sikkim. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 7

Pelling – Gangtok

By Surface

Breakfast and check-out from hotel. This morning drive to Gangtok, en-route visit the Rumtek Monastery - The largest monastery in Sikkim, it is the seat of the Karmapa Lama, the third highest monk in Tibetan Buddhism. It also serves as one of the most important seats of the Kagyu (Black Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet and is also known as Dharma Chakra Centre, it was built by the 4th King of Sikkim under the supervision of the



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9th Karmapa (head of the Karma Kagyu sect). At an elevation of almost 5000 ft and surrounded by lush green landscape, the monastery is a visual treat besides offering spiritual solace. The architectural design is almost identical to the original Kagyu headquarters in Tibet. It enshrines a golden stupa which contains relics like statues and paintings that belong to the 16th Karmapa. It houses religious art objects and some of the world's most unique religious scriptures. Upon arrival in Gangtok, check-in at hotel. Rest of the day at leisure. Overnight stay at Hotel.

Day 8

Gangtok

Breakfast at hotel. This morning visit some of the fascinating sights in Gangtok. Visit Phodong Monastery, it was built in the early 18th century but an older monastery had pre-existed the current one. The 9th Karmapa was invited by the king of Sikkim, where he founded three monasteries: Rumtek, the most important monastery of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, Phodong and Ralang Monastery. This beautiful monastery makes the abode of not less than 250 monks and it is adorned by the old mural paintings. Phodong Monastery is the major monastery of Karmapa sub-sect of Kagyupa sect. Afternoon visit the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology - It is a premiere institute and research center located atop a small hill. The main attraction here is the museum which houses around 200 Buddhist icons, antique Paintings, Thangkas, Statues, Shrines, Tapestries, Masks and other religious works of Tibetan Art. Establishment in 1958, it has sponsored and promoted research on the religion, history, language, art and culture of the people of the Tibetan cultural area which includes Sikkim. Its library holds one of the largest collections of Tibetan works in the world outside Tibet. Later visit Do Drul Chorten - an imposing white stupa. This holy stupa was built under the direction of Late Truslshi Rimpoche in 1945. It is part of the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism. There are 108 prayer wheels and the wheels have a special meaning. Turning of these wheels goes along with the chanting of the mantras engraved on them. The sound of a collective chant emanates from the prayer and meditation rooms in the monastery can also be heard in the background. The famous Do Drul Chorten has a gold plated spire. The Chorten is encircled by Chorten Lhakhang and Guru Lhakhang that boast of the two colossal statues of Guru Rimpoche (as Guru Padmasambhava is popularly referred as in these parts). Overnight stay at hotel

Day 9

Gangtok – Kalimpong

By Surface

Breakfast and check-out from hotel. This morning drive to the remote hill station of Kalimpong. Situated at an altitude of 1250 metres, it enjoys temperate climate throughout the year. Somewhat secluded and tucked away in the corner under big Darjeeling umbrella, Kalimpong offers a quiet and relaxed holiday, against the backdrop of the Kanchenjunga. It was once a key trade point between India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. Upon arrival check-in at hotel. Afternoon tour of the Gompas and the local market. Overnight stay at Hotel.

Day 10

Kalimpong – Pheuntsholing

By Surface



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Breakfast and check-out from hotel. Morning drive to the border town of Pheuntsholing. Arrive and check-in at hotel. Remaining day at leisure. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 11

Pheuntsholing – Thimpu

By Surface

Breakfast at Hotel and later check-out. This morning drive to the Bhutanese capital city, Thimpu. Arrive and check-in at hotel. The remaining day will be at leisure. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 12

Thimpu

Breakfast at Hotel. In the morning proceed for the full day sightseeing of Thimpu valley, visit Taschihho Dzong - It has been the seat of the government since 1952 and presently houses the throne room of his majesty and offices, the secretariat and the ministries of home affairs and finance. Other government departments are housed in buildings nearby. Visit Chorten Memorial, the Stupa built to honor memory of Late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, Bhutan's third King in year 1974, popularly known as the Father of Modern Bhutan. Later visit the Handicrafts emporium displaying rich traditional textiles and crafts of the Kingdom, the National Library which has a fascinating collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts and texts, the Painting and Wood craft School famous for traditional Thangkas paintings also visit traditional Medicine Institute where centuries old healing art are still practiced. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 13

Thimpu – Punakha

By Surface

Early breakfast at hotel and later check-out. Early in the morning drive to ancient capital of Punakha, travelling through pine forests. Stop at the top of the Dolchu La Pass with far reaching views of mountain ranges where hundreds of colorful prayer flags flutter in the wind. Afterwards continue the drive to Punakha, upon arrival check-in at hotel. In the afternoon visit the Punakha Dzong, built in 1637 and the valley of Wangdu Phodrang, situated at the junction of Punakha Chu and Tang Chu rivers. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 14

Punakha – Paro

By Surface

Breakfast and later check-out from hotel. In the morning drive to Paro, arrive and check-in at hotel. This afternoon visit the Ta Dzong, formerly a watchtower and now housing the national museum, stroll through the market and along the Paro river. Overnight stay at hotel.

Day 15

Paro

Breakfast at hotel. In the morning proceed for a trek to Taktsang, the cliff side monastery perched on a rocky ledge with a sheer drop of over 800 mt. In the afternoon visit the Rinpung Dzong, the administrative seat of the district of Paro containing a state monastic community of about 200 monks. Overnight stay at hotel.



Day 16

Paro – Kolkata

By Flight

Breakfast at hotel and later check-out. In-time transfer to airport to board flight for Kolkata, arrive and take connecting flight for the return journey.