

Earthbound Expeditions

Sikkim, Darjeeling, And Bhutan Tour

13 days, from US$3,387 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
13 days	**14 people**	**Bhutan**

Sikkim, Darjeeling, And Bhutan Tour Overview

A journey to the Buddhist monasteries and the Himalaya

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On our Sikkim and Darjeeling tour with a Bhutan extension, you visit centuries-old Buddhist monasteries, walk along mountain cliffs and hike past rice terraces that step down the steep hillsides. Your journey in the eastern Himalaya begins with your arrival and transfer to Darjeeling, where the tour includes a ride on the narrow-gauge mountain railway and a sunrise view over Kanchenjunga from Tiger Hill.

You visit Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, and the well-known Rumtek Monastery, seat of the Karmapa. You travel to Kalimpong, once an important trading post in the region. From Kalimpong the road descends to the plains known as the Duars, which are covered in tea gardens.

You then cross into Bhutan at Phuentsholing on the India and Bhutan border. In Bhutan you learn about the country's culture through its shrines, temples and handicrafts as you travel from the south to western Bhutan, through the towns and villages of the Paro, Thimphu and Punakha valleys. You hike to Bhutan's Tiger's Nest monastery on its cliff and explore the dzongs, the ancient fortresses that once protected the kingdom from invaders.

Sikkim and Darjeeling, and Bhutan, are two regions of the eastern Himalaya known for their natural beauty and for the Buddhist way of life that their people follow.
We invite you to join us on our Sikkim, Darjeeling and Bhutan tour.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

On arrival in Kathmandu, we meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. After check-in there is a briefing, and the rest of the day is free.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: None

Day 2

Kathmandu sightseeing and drive to Nagarkot

After breakfast you set out on a full day of sightseeing in the Kathmandu Valley. This includes the Hindu temple complex of Pashupatinath (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Boudhanath, the largest Buddhist stupa, and Swayambhunath, the Monkey Temple, which is 2,000 years old. You then drive to Nagarkot (7,200 ft), a hill station with a wide mountain panorama from Everest in the east to Annapurna in the west, including eight of the world's highest mountains, in a quiet rural setting. Meals: breakfast and dinner.

Altitude: 2,175 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3

Return to Kathmandu via Bhaktapur

Early in the morning you watch the sunrise and the mountain view from Nagarkot, then drive back to Kathmandu via the historic town of Bhaktapur. You stay in Kathmandu and prepare for the Bhutan part of the trip. Meals: breakfast.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Fly to Bhadrapur and drive to Darjeeling, India

After breakfast, we transfer you to the airport for the one-hour flight to Bhadrapur in south-east Nepal, followed by a transfer to Darjeeling. You need to obtain your Indian visa at home before travelling in order to enter India. Overnight in Darjeeling.

Altitude: 2,050 m On foot: None, 3–4 hr drive Night: Hotel, Darjeeling Meals: Breakfast

Day 5

Darjeeling sightseeing

Early in the morning, at around 4 am, you drive to Tiger Hill (8,364 ft / 2,550 m) to view the sunrise over Kanchenjunga (subject to clear weather). On the way back you visit Ghoom Monastery and the Batasia Loop. After breakfast you set out on a half-day sightseeing tour covering the Japanese Temple, the Peace Pagoda, the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (closed on Thursdays), the Darjeeling Ropeway ride (ticket not included, approximately INR 180.00 per person), Tenzing and Gombu Rock, the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre (closed on Sundays) and a panoramic view of a tea estate. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 2,050 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Darjeeling Meals: Breakfast

Day 6

Drive from Darjeeling to Gangtok, Sikkim

You drive to Gangtok (5,500 ft / 1,677 m, 130 km, 4 to 5 hours). Check in and overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 1,680 m On foot: None, 4–5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Gangtok Meals: Breakfast

Day 7

Gangtok sightseeing

After breakfast you set out on a sightseeing tour covering Rumtek Monastery, Do Drul Chorten, the Research Institute of Tibetology, the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (closed on Sundays), the Flower Show and Enchey Monastery. The evening is free to explore Gangtok. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 1,680 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Gangtok Meals: Breakfast

Day 8

Drive from Gangtok to Phuentsholing

After breakfast, you transfer to Phuentsholing, the border town between India and Bhutan. The evening is free to explore the town. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 300 m On foot: None, 7–8 hr drive Night: Hotel, Phuentsholing Meals: Breakfast

Day 9

Drive from Phuentsholing to Thimphu

After breakfast, you drive to Thimphu, which takes about 5 hours. In Thimphu you visit: 1. The National Memorial Stupa, built in memory of the late third King of Bhutan. 2. Tashichho Dzong, built as a fortress in the 17th century and now used as the “Seat of the Royal Government”. Overnight: hotel in Thimphu.

Altitude: 2,320 m On foot: None, 5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Thimphu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Drive from Thimphu to Punakha

In the morning you visit Buddha Point, home to the largest statue of the Buddha in Bhutan and a good viewpoint over Thimphu. 1. You then drive to Punakha (3 hours) via the Dochula pass, at an elevation of 3,100 metres. 2. Chimi Lhakhang, a 30-minute hike, is dedicated to Drukpa Kunley, known in the West as the Divine Madman. 3. Punakha Dzong, the most impressive dzong in the country, stands at the confluence of two rivers. Punakha was formerly the capital of Bhutan. Overnight: hotel in Punakha.

Altitude: 1,200 m On foot: None, 3 hr drive Night: Hotel, Punakha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Drive from Punakha to Paro

You drive to Paro, which takes about 4 hours. Visits: 1. Ta Dzong, an ancient watchtower that now houses the National Museum. 2. Paro Dzong, the centre of civil and religious authority in the valley. A short walk takes you to the base of the dzong and across a traditional covered cantilever bridge. A short distance further is one of the many archery grounds. Archery is the national sport of Bhutan, and you may be able to watch a match in progress. Overnight at a hotel in Paro.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, 4 hr drive Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Hike to Tiger's Nest, Paro

1. You drive to the foot of the hill below Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest) and hike up to the monastery, which sits approximately 1,000 metres above the Paro valley. The hike takes around 5 hours for the round trip. A pony ride is available for the ascent only, at extra cost. 2. Kichu Lhakhang, the oldest temple in Bhutan, founded in the 7th century by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. Overnight at a hotel in Paro.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: 5 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Departure

After breakfast, you depart for Kathmandu, Delhi, Bangkok, Singapore or Kolkata.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- All accommodation in Nepal, India and Bhutan.
- Meals as listed in the itinerary.
- Private transfers and internal flights to Bhadrapur.
- Sightseeing tours with professional English-speaking tour guides.
- All airport pick-ups and transfers.
- Farewell dinner with a Nepali cultural show.
- Travel permits.
- Bhutan visa fees.
- Entrance fees for major monuments in Bhutan.

Not included

- Personal travel insurance.
- All personal items.
- Some lunches and dinners.
- Tips for guides and drivers.
- Mountain and road rescue.

- Other emergency evacuations, which will be charged if required.
- Expenses arising from illness, landslides, political disturbances, re-routing, flight cancellations or any other unforeseen situations or events outside our control.
- Drinks, telephone bills, laundry, postage and similar items.
- Nepal and India visa costs.
- City monument entrance fees of approximately USD 35, payable on arrival in Nepal.
- Flights into Nepal and out of Bhutan.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/sikkim-darjeeling-and-bhutan-tour