



SIKKIM

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ABOUT THE PLACE



Sikkim, state in India, is located in the northeastern part of the country, in the eastern Himalayas. It is one of the smallest states in India. Sikkim is bordered by the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north and northeast, by Bhutan to the southeast, by the Indian state of West Bengal to the south, and by Nepal to the west. The capital is Gangtok, in the southeastern part of the state

A part of the Eastern Himalaya, Sikkim is notable for its biodiversity, including alpine and subtropical climates, as well as being a host to Kangchenjunga, the highest peak in India and third highest on Earth. Sikkim's capital and largest city is Gangtok. Almost 35% of the state is covered by the Khangchendzonga National Park.

Long a sovereign political entity, Sikkim became a protectorate of India in 1950 and an Indian state in 1975. Its small size notwithstanding, Sikkim is of great political and strategic importance for India because of its location along several international boundaries. Area 2,740 square miles (7,096 square km). Pop. (2011) 607,688.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE



The People of Sikkim consist of three ethnic groups, that is, **Lepcha**, **Bhutia** and **Nepali**. Communities of different hues intermingle freely in Sikkim to constitute a homogenous blend. Hindu Temples coexist with Buddhist Monasteries, Churches, Mosque and Gurudwara. The predominant Communities are Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese. These myriad Cultures has produced a quintessential Sikkimese Culture that encompasses all ways and walk of life, but has also managed to preserve their own identity. These can also be seen in the various places of Worship, Festivals and Cultural dances that are celebrated through the year

The native Sikkimese consist of the Bhutias, who migrated from the Kham district of Tibet in the 14th century, and the Lepchas, who are believed to have migrated from the Far East. Tibetans reside mostly in the northern and eastern reaches of the state. Migrant resident communities include Bengalis, Biharis and Marwaris, who are prominent in commerce in South Sikkim and Gangtok.

LANGUAGE IN SIKKIM

The official languages of the state are English, Nepali, Sikkimese (Bhutia) and Lepcha. Additional official languages include Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Mukhia, Newari, Rai, Sherpa and Tamang for the purpose of preservation of culture and tradition in the state.

Nepali is the lingua franca of Sikkim, while Sikkimese (Bhutia) and Lepcha are spoken in certain areas. English is also spoken and understood in most of Sikkim. Other languages include Dzongkha, Groma, Hindi, Majhi, Majhwar, Thulung, Tibetan, and Yakha.

The major languages spoken as per census 2001 are Nepali (62.61%), Sikkimese (Bhutia) (7.73%), Hindi (6.67%), Lepcha (6.61%), Limbu (6.34%), Sherpa (2.57%), Tamang (1.87%) and Rai (1.64%)

DISTRICTS OF SIKKIM

Sikkim has four districts – East Sikkim, North Sikkim, South Sikkim and West Sikkim. The district capitals are Gangtok, Mangan, Namchi and Gyalshing respectively. These four districts are further divided into 16 subdivisions; Pakyong, Rongli, Rangpo and Gangtok are the subdivisions of the East district. Soreng, Yuksom, Gyalshing and Dentam are the subdivisions of the West district. Chungthang, Dzongu, Kabi and Mangan are the subdivisions of the North district. Ravongla, Jorethang, Namchi and Yangyang are the subdivisions of the South district.



East District:

The east district is the most populated with Gangtok being the main administrative and business centre. Apart from the modern attractions of the capital town, in the east you will also find the beautiful Tsomgo Lake, the historically important Nathula pass, as well as many monasteries and temples. Gangtok is the capital of Sikkim and heart of all the business hubs.



North District:

Perhaps the most beautiful of the districts, the North offers an exquisite experience for the lover of Nature and alpine scenery. Yumthang alone is enough to satiate the most demanding, with its panoramic Valley of Flowers. During springtime the lush meadows abound with delicate wildflowers that carpet the Valley floor in a rich riot of colors. A must-see here are the Hot Springs and the vibrant Sikkimese tribal culture and customs. 67 kms from Gangtok is the Mangan District Headquarter of North District. A three day music festival is held at Mangan in December every year.



West District:

West Sikkim is replete with history and religion. This is where the first Chogyal of Sikkim was consecrated at Yuksum in 1642 and this is where some of the holiest and most important monasteries of Sikkim were established, including Dubdi and Sanga Choling, the first monasteries to be built in Sikkim. West Sikkim is beautiful terrain abounding in lakes and waterfalls and also has great trekking routes. Gyalshing is the head quarter and town of the West District.



South District:

South Sikkim, the smallest district belies its size with its variety of tourist attractions. With stupendous view of the Khangchendzonga range, the south of Sikkim is a fairy tale land of picturesque villages and high hills. Near Namchi, the district headquarters is Samdruptse Hill, the site of the 135 feet tall statue of Guru Padmasambhava. In the south too are Tendong Hill and Maenam Hill, of mythical importance to the Lepchas and Bhutias, as well as the tourist destination of Ravangla which hosts the annual Pang Lhabso festival with great pageantry. Namchi is the district headquarter of South Sikkim which is 78 kms from Gangtok.

ITINERARY

DAY – 1 : AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT TO GANGTOK, SIKKIM



We started our journey from Ahmedabad at 12 Pm and arrived at Gangtok Airport by 9.30 Pm. Since everything was booked in advance, we didn't have to waste time anywhere finding a cab and bargaining on the spot. I had planned our entire trip with the help of Travel Triangle which made transportation, permits, and accommodation hassle free for us.

Breakfast at the hotel Football stadium bounded by mountains!

DAY – 2: GANGTOK TO LACHEN



We woke up to chirping birds in the mountains next to our hotel. It was around 4.30 am. We could not resist but go out to watch the sunrise and to take an early walk in the capital city. We walked to M G Marg which is a km away from the hotel, took a stroll in the place. It felt so good watching kids play football at that time of the day in one of the beautiful football stadium bounded by mountains. We got back to the hotel by 7.30 am, had a heavy breakfast and we started our journey from Gangtok towards Lachen at about 9 am. It took a good six-hour drive to reach Lachen. Due to the rugged terrain, the bad road conditions and as you know one can't say no to a several pit stops on the way to soak in all the beauty of waterfalls, picturesque landscapes, which took us longer than expected to reach. We arrived at Lachen by 3 pm and checked into hotel Royal delight Lachen, a hotel with good food and a great view of the mountains.

Lachen is a picturesque hamlet in North of Sikkim, wherever you go you see mountains that take your breath away. We went on an aimless stroll in the Lachen village in the evening. We tried some delicious Momos at the local shop and picked up some snacks for the journey that was ahead of us for the next day. After a refreshing walk in the village of Lachen, we got back to our hotel, had dinner and slept as early as we could.

DAY – 3: VISIT GURUDONGMAR LAKE, CHOPTA VALLEY\



Yayy!!! This day, we geared up for the ultimate roller coaster ride. So should you.

We left our hotel early in the morning at about 4.30 am for the exciting drive to Gurudongmar Lake. We stopped on the way for breakfast. Sipping hot tea with delicious steaming Maggie staring at the Lofty Mountains had already made my day. We drove further into Chopta valley to the picturesque landscapes and finally to the lake.

Gurudongmar Lake is one of the highest alpine lakes in the world (18,000 feet), not only known for its spectacular beauty, but is also revered as a sacred lake by Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs. Roadway to the lake is a rugged terrain with little vegetation and no human population. As we reached the lake, we were welcomed by the mesmerizing views of the emerald blue lake surrounded by snow-covered peaks of the Eastern Himalayas which took our breath away. Literally, we all went short of breath due to lack of oxygen at such high altitudes. We had carried Oxygen cans (Bought it from Amazon.in) which came to our rescue. We could not stay there for more than 25mins as we were hit by AMS (Altitude mountain sickness) and from there we started our journey towards Kala Pattar which is at an elevation of 18,519 ft. It was not on the regular package but was added by paying a little extra to the driver on the spot (INR 3000). It was suggested to us by the driver and we didn't miss a chance to visit the place. The drive to Kala Pathar was absolutely stunning with the black mountain stone complementing the white snow. It was really a sight to behold. We hired boots & gloves on spot to hike and play in the snow. This was where I got to see and play with snow for the first time in Sikkim. Took a Snow Slide too!!

DAY – 4: UNPLANNED, UNEXPECTED YET MUCH NEEDED REST DAY

As we were all majorly hit by AMS and motion sickness, we fell sick and we were not in a good condition to travel. So, we decided to take a day rest to bounce back to the action ahead. We loved the hotel people and their hospitality which helped us to recover sooner than expected and by early evening we started feeling better. We went for a quick walk around our hotel which had the best views of mountains and a mini stream flowing right next to our hotel. We had taken the necessary electrolytes drinks in the morning to keep us hydrated after continuous throwing up all night.

DAY – 5: VISIT ZERO POINT, YUMTHANG VALLEY, HOT SPRING IN LACHUNG



Altitude: 15300 FTS (Zero Point), 12000 FTS (Yumthang Valley)

Distance: about 200kms inclusive of 124KMS from Lachung to Gangtok

Duration: Whole Day

We woke up by 5 am, had breakfast and decided to visit Yumthang valley and Zero Point which we had missed on the previous day due to ill health. We started our journey to Yumthang valley, the valley of flowers. Winding mountainous roads from Lachung to Yumthang Valley took us through enchanting vistas of sparkling streams, lush slopes and stretches of mountain flowers. This valley and sanctuary gets painted in hues of red during April-May when all these varieties of Rhododendrons are in full bloom; But since we visited in June, we could not get a good sight of the flower-filled valley as the flowers had shredded due to the rain. We continued further to Zero point (Yumesamdong) which remains covered in snow throughout the year. We spent some time there eating boiled eggs and peanuts staring at the alluring mountains. And then we started our journey back to Gangtok. En route Gangtok, we stopped to see the hot spring for which we had to hike for about 15mins. It was in a building, to our surprise, found two guys bathing in the tank where hot spring was flowing. Looked as if we had entered someone's bathroom with permission! We had lunch on the way and reached Gangtok at around 7 pm, checked into our hotel: Sikkim Retreat (the same hotel as of the first day). Had heavy dinner and dozed off in no time.

DAY – 6: VISIT TO TSOMGO LAKE, OLD BABA MANDIR, ELEPHANT LAKE, THAMBI VIEWPOINT AND TRANSFER TO ZULUK/PADAMCHEN.



Altitude: 5500 FTS (Gangtok), 11200FTS (Thambi View Point)

Distance: about 100KMS

Duration: Whole Day

After a heavy breakfast, we started our journey towards Zuluk by about 9 am. Due to heavy traffic, we could not move not more than 6kms/ hr, which delayed the whole trip. We visited Tshangu Lake (40 km) – enchanting oval shaped Sacred Lake en route Nathula Pass where you will also see hundreds of Yaks. We also took a memorable Yak ride in its vicinity.

Further, we drove to Elephant/Kapup Lake. Then we stopped by old Baba Harbhajan Singh Mandir, the memorial is dedicated to the brave soldier of the Indian Army who lost his life around 30 years back in this region. Google about him for fascinating stories.

From there we continued our journey to Thambi viewpoint, located at 11200 feet, which offers a panoramic view of mountain ranges and loops of silk route and Zuluk village. Viewpoint had only one stall where I tried a local dish Tukpa and some boiled eggs with hot tea. The view from up there was incredible. We drove further down to Padamchen village passing through Zuluk village which had the eye-catching landscapes. We reached Padamchen by 5 pm and were welcomed by authentic local black tea and snacks by our Homestay owner. Zuluk and Padamchen villages are of scenic value and very rejuvenating. No matter where we saw, we could only find scenery that was worth taking a thousand pictures. There are no resorts or hotels in these areas. You will find Homestays only. As it's one of the remote villages of the country, there was no electricity at all and we spent the evening just in candle light which cannot be forgotten and resumed our travel the next day.

DAY – 7 :ZULUK/PADAMCHEN TO PELLING VIA RAVANGLA BUDDHA PARK



Altitude: 6250 FTS

Distance: about 160KMS

Duration: 6-8hours

We woke up early for a walk where we witnessed Army school kids doing push-ups on the road at about 5.30am. So much energy in such little place!! We were stunned looking at them. We also got to see a part of Bhutan from the place we stayed. We had breakfast at the Homestay and started our journey towards Pelling by 9 am. We visited Tathagatha Tsal (Buddha Park) at Ravangla on the way followed by lunch. After Lunch continued towards our hotel we were excited about, Hotel Norbhugang Retreat and Spa, which had the best views of the Mt. Kanchenjunga ranges and is located at Upper Pelling. We made sure to save the best for the last to relax & have Leisure time to stroll around the city without opting for cabs.

DAY – 8: PELLING SIGHTSEEING



Ititude: 7200 FTS

Distance: about 40KMS

Duration: 3-4hours

On this day, we had planned to stroll around the city without taking any transport. We woke up to no view as the rain was pelting down heavily. We had heavy colourful breakfast at the hotel and started to walk towards Rabdentse Ruins, which was 3km away from the hotel we stayed in. As it was raining heavily, walking to the Ruins seemed difficult, so we stopped by a taxi stand and took a taxi to the Ruins which costed us INR 150. As soon as we reached Rabdentse Ruins, we bought entry tickets for INR 50 each and started hiking to the top. The place was filled with lush green, was very quiet and dark which reminded us of the dense Amazon forest. After around good 30mins walk we made it to the top which had no view of the city due to dense fog. But the Jungle trail was absolutely amazing. We next visited Pemayangtse Monastery.

DAY – 9: GANGTOK TO AHMEDABAD



On the 8th day we are departed to Ahmedabad from gangtok.

FEES

Type	Fees	Days/Nights	Age Group
Ahmedabad - Gangtok	Rs. 61,599/-	9 Days 8 Night	For all