

= Gangtok =

Gangtok (/ ɡæŋtʊk /) is a municipality , the capital and the largest town of the Indian state of Sikkim . It also is the headquarters of the East Sikkim district . Gangtok is located in the eastern Himalayan range , at an elevation of 1 @, @ 650 m (5 @, @ 410 ft) . The town 's population of 100 @, @ 000 belongs to different ethnicities such as Nepali , Lepchas and Bhutia . Nestled within higher peaks of the Himalaya and enjoying a year @-@ round mild temperate climate , Gangtok is at the centre of Sikkim 's tourism industry .

Gangtok rose to prominence as a popular Buddhist pilgrimage site after the construction of the Enchey Monastery in 1840 . In 1894 , the ruling Sikkimese Chogyal , Thutob Namgyal , transferred the capital to Gangtok . In the early 20th century , Gangtok became a major stopover on the trade route between Lhasa in Tibet and cities such as Kolkata (then Calcutta) in British India . After India won its independence from Britain in 1947 , Sikkim chose to remain an independent monarchy , with Gangtok as its capital . In 1975 , after the integration with the union of India , Gangtok was made India 's 22nd state capital .

The precise meaning of the name " Gangtok " is unclear , though the most popular meaning is " hill top " . Today , Gangtok is a centre of Tibetan Buddhist culture and learning , with the presence of several monasteries , religious educational institutions , and centres for Tibetology .

= = History = =

Like the rest of Sikkim , not much is known about the early history of Gangtok . The earliest records date from the construction of the hermitic Gangtok monastery in 1716 . Gangtok remained a small hamlet until the construction of the Enchey Monastery in 1840 made it a pilgrimage center . It became the capital of what was left of Sikkim after an English conquest in the mid @-@ 19th century in response to a hostage crisis . After the defeat of the Tibetans by the British , Gangtok became a major stopover in the trade between Tibet and British India at the end of the 19th century . Most of the roads and the telegraph in the area were built during this time .

In 1894 , Thutob Namgyal , the Sikkimese monarch under British rule , shifted the capital from Tumlong to Gangtok , increasing the city 's importance . A new grand palace along with other state buildings was built in the new capital . Following India 's independence in 1947 , Sikkim became a nation @-@ state with Gangtok as its capital . Sikkim came under the suzerainty of India , with the condition that it would retain its independence , by the treaty signed between the Chogyal and the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru . This pact gave the Indians control of external affairs on behalf of Sikkimese . Trade between India and Tibet continued to flourish through the Nathula and Jeleppla passes , offshoots of the ancient Silk Road near Gangtok . These border passes were sealed after the Sino @-@ Indian War in 1962 , which deprived Gangtok of its trading business . The Nathula pass was finally opened for limited trade in 2006 , fuelling hopes of economic boom .

In 1975 , after years of political uncertainty and struggle , including riots , the monarchy was abrogated and Sikkim became India 's twenty @-@ second state , with Gangtok as its capital after a referendum . Gangtok has witnessed annual landslides , resulting in loss of life and damage to property . The largest disaster occurred in June 1997 , when 38 were killed and hundreds of buildings were destroyed .

= = Geography = =

Gangtok is located at 27 @. @ 3325 ° N 88 @. @ 6140 ° E ? / 27 @. @ 3325 ; 88 @. @ 6140 (coordinates of Gangtok head post office) . It is situated in the lower Himalayas at an elevation of 1 @, @ 650 m (5 @, @ 410 ft) . The town lies on one side of a hill , with " The Ridge " , a promenade housing the Raj Bhawan , the governor 's residence , at one end and the palace , situated at an altitude of about 1 @, @ 800 m (5 @, @ 900 ft) , at the other . The city is flanked on east and west by two streams , namely Roro Chu and Ranikhola , respectively . These two rivers divide the natural drainage into two parts , the eastern and western parts . Both the streams meet the Ranipul and

flow south as the main Ranikhola before it joins the Teesta at Singtam . Most of the roads are steep , with the buildings built on compacted ground alongside them .

Most of Sikkim , including Gangtok , is underlain by Precambrian rocks which contains foliated phyllites and schists ; slopes are therefore prone to frequent landslides . Surface runoff of water by natural streams (jhora) and man @-@ made drains has contributed to the risk of landslides . According to the Bureau of Indian Standards , the town falls under seismic zone @-@ IV (on a scale of I to V , in order of increasing seismic activity) , near the convergent boundary of the Indian and the Eurasian tectonic plates and is subject to frequent earthquakes . The hills are nestled within higher peaks and the snow @-@ clad Himalayan ranges tower over the town from the distance . Mount Kanchenjunga (8 @,@ 598 m or 28 @,@ 208 ft) ? the world 's third @-@ highest peak ? is visible to the west of the city . The existence of steep slopes , vulnerability to landslides , large forest cover and inadequate access to most areas have been a major impediment to the natural and balanced growth of the city .

There are densely forested regions around Gangtok , consisting of temperate , deciduous forests of poplar , birch , oak , and elm , as well as evergreen , coniferous trees of the wet alpine zone . Orchids are common , and rare varieties of orchids are featured in flower shows in the city . Bamboos are also abundant . In the lower reaches of the town , the vegetation gradually changes from alpine to temperate deciduous and subtropical . Flowers such as sunflower , marigold , poinsettia , and others bloom , especially in November and December .

= = = Climate = = =

Gangtok features a monsoon @-@ influenced subtropical highland climate (Köppen : Cwb) . Because of its elevation and sheltered environment , Gangtok enjoys a mild , temperate climate all year round . Like most Himalayan towns , Gangtok has five seasons : summer , monsoons , autumn , winter and spring . Temperatures range from an average maximum of 22 ° C (72 ° F) in summer to an average minimum of 4 ° C (39 ° F) in winter . Summers (lasting from late April to June) are mild , with maximum temperatures rarely crossing 25 ° C (77 ° F) . The monsoon season from June to September is characterised by intense torrential rains often causing landslides that block Gangtok 's land access to the rest of the country . Rainfall starts to rise from pre @-@ monsoon in May , and peaks during the monsoon , with July recording the highest monthly average of 649 @.@ 6 mm (25 @.@ 6 in) . In winter temperature averages between 4 ° C (39 ° F) and 7 ° C (45 ° F) . Snowfall is rare , and in recent times Gangtok has received snow only in 1990 , 2004 , 2005 and January 2011 . Temperatures below freezing are also rare . During this season the weather can be unstable , and change abruptly from bright sunshine and clear skies to heavy rain within a couple of hours . During spring and autumn the weather is generally sunny and mild . Owing to its elevation , Gangtok is often enveloped in fog during the monsoon and winter months .

= = Economy = =

The hospitality industry is the largest industry in Gangtok as the city is the main base for Sikkim tourism . Summer and spring seasons are the most popular tourist seasons . Many of Gangtok 's residents are employed directly and indirectly in the tourism industry , with many residents owning and working in hotels and restaurants .

Ecotourism has emerged as an important economic activity in the region which includes trekking , mountaineering , river rafting and other nature oriented activities . An estimated 351 @,@ 000 tourists visited Sikkim in 2007 , generating revenue of about Rs 50 crores (Rs 500 millions) .

The Nathula Pass , located about 50 km (31 mi) from Gangtok , used to be the primary route of the wool , fur and spice trade with Tibet and spurred economic growth for Gangtok till the mid @-@ 20th century . In 1962 , after the border was closed during the Sino @-@ Indian War , Gangtok fell into recession . The pass was reopened in 2006 and trade through the pass is expected to boost the economy of Gangtok . The Sikkim government is keen to open a Lhasa ? Gangtok bus service via Nathula pass . Sikkim 's mountainous terrain results in the lack of train or air links , limiting the area

's potential for rapid industrial development . The government is the largest employer in the city , both directly and as contractors . Gangtok 's economy does not have a large manufacturing base , but has a thriving Cottage industry in watch @-@ making , country @-@ made alcohol and handicrafts . Among the handicrafts are the handmade paper industry made from various vegetable fibres or cotton rags . The main market in Gangtok provides many of the state 's rural residents a place to offer their produce during the harvest seasons . The majority of the private business community is made up of Marwaris and Biharis . As part of Sikkim , Gangtok enjoys the status of being an income @-@ tax free region as per the state 's 1948 Income tax law . As Sikkim is a frontier state , the Indian army maintains a large presence in the vicinity of Gangtok . This leads to a population of semi @-@ permanent residents who bring money into the local economy . The Sikkim government started India 's first online lottery Playwin to boost government income , but this was later closed by a ruling from the Sikkim High Court .

In 2013 premier Indian publishing company Thomson Digital opened its production unit in Gangtok . Thus becoming first MNC to venture there and paving path for future private companies to explore potential of young workforce of Gangtok .

= = Civic administration = =

Gangtok is administered by Gangtok Municipal Corporation along with the various departments of Government of Sikkim , particularly the Urban Development and Housing Department (UDHD) and Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) . These departments looked after the civic functions such as garbage disposal , water supply , tax collection , license allotments , and civic infrastructure . An administrator appointed by the state government headed the UDHD .

As the headquarters of East Sikkim district , Gangtok houses the offices of the district collector , an administrator appointed by the Union Government of India . Gangtok is also the seat of the Sikkim High Court , which is India 's smallest High Court in terms of area and population of jurisdiction . Gangtok does not have its own police commissionerate like other major cities in India . Instead , it comes under the jurisdiction of the state police , which is headed by a Director General of Police , although an Inspector General of Police oversees the town . Sikkim is known for its very low crime rate . Rongyek jail in Gangtok is Sikkim 's only central jail .

Gangtok is within the Sikkim Lok Sabha constituency that elects a member to the Lok Sabha (Lower House) of the Indian Parliament . The city elects one member in the Sikkim state legislative assembly , the Vidhan Sabha . The Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) won both the parliamentary election in 2009 and the state assembly seat in the 2009 state assembly polls .

= = Utility services = =

Electricity is supplied by the power department of the Government of Sikkim . Gangtok has a nearly uninterrupted electricity supply due to Sikkim 's numerous hydroelectric power stations . The rural roads around Gangtok are maintained by the Border Roads Organisation , a division of the Indian army . Several roads in Gangtok are reported to be in a poor condition , whereas building construction activities continue almost unrestrained in this city lacking proper land infrastructure . Most households are supplied by the central water system maintained and operated by the PHED . The main source of PHED water supply is the Rateychu River , located about 16 km (9 @.@ 9 mi) from the city , at an altitude of 2 @,@ 621 m (8 @,@ 599 ft) . Its water treatment plant is located at Selep . The river Rateychu is snow @-@ fed and has perennial streams . Since there is no habitation in the catchment area except for a small army settlement , there is little environmental degradation and the water is of very good quality . 40 seasonal local springs are used by the Rural Management and Development Department of Sikkim Government to supply water to outlying rural areas .

Around 40 % of the population has access to sewers . However , only the toilet waste is connected to the sewer while sullage is discharged into the drains . Without a proper sanitation system , the practice of disposing sewage through septic tanks and directly discharging into Jhoras and open

drains is prevalent . The entire city drains into the two rivers , Ranikhola and Roro Chu , through numerous small streams and Jhoras . Ranikhola and Roro Chu rivers confluence with Teesta River , the major source of drinking water to the population downstream . The densely populated urban area of Gangtok does not have a combined drainage system to drain out the storm water and waste water from the buildings . The estimated solid waste generated in Gangtok city is approximately 45 tonnes . Only around 40 % of this is collected by UDHD , while the remainder is indiscriminately thrown into Jhora , streets and valleys . The collected waste is disposed in a dump located about 20 km (12 mi) from the city . There is no waste collection from inaccessible areas where vehicles cannot reach , nor does any system of collection of waste exist in the adjoining rural areas . The city is under a statewide ban on the use of polythene bags .

= = Transport = =

= = = Road = = =

Taxis are the most widely available public transport within Gangtok . Most of the residents stay within a few kilometres of the town centre and many have their own vehicles such as two @-@ wheelers and cars . The share of personal vehicles and taxis combined is 98 % of Gangtok 's total vehicles , a high percentage when compared to other Indian cities . City buses comprise less than one percent of vehicles . Those travelling longer distances generally make use of share @-@ jeeps , a kind of public taxis . Four wheel drives are used to easily navigate the steep slopes of the roads . The 1 km (0 @. @ 6 mi) long cable car with three stops connects lower Gangtok suburbs with Sikkim Legislative assembly in central Gangtok and the upper suburbs .

Gangtok is connected to the rest of India by an all @-@ weather metalled highway , National Highway 10 ? earlier known as National Highway 31A , which links Gangtok to Siliguri , located 114 km (71 mi) away in the neighbouring state of West Bengal . The highway also provides a link to the neighbouring hill station towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong , which are the nearest urban areas . Regular jeep , van , and bus services link these towns to Gangtok . Gangtok is a linear city that has developed along the arterial roads , especially National Highway 31A . Most of the road length in Gangtok , is of two lane undivided carriageway with footpath on one side of the road and drain on the other . The steep gradient of the different road stretches coupled with a spiral road configuration constrain the smooth flow of vehicular as well as pedestrian traffic .

= = = Rail = = =

The nearest railhead connected to the rest of India is the station of New Jalpaiguri in Siliguri , situated 124 km (77 mi) away from Gangtok . Work has commenced for a broad gauge railway link from Sevoke in West Bengal to Rangpo in Sikkim that is planned for extension to Gangtok .

= = = Air = = =

The closest airport is Bagdogra Airport , (IATA airport code IXB) in Siliguri , 16 km (10 mi) from Siliguri Town . Gangtok is linked to Bagdogra airport by a daily helicopter service that operates only once a day and carries four passengers . Pakyong Airport , a greenfield airport , southeast of Gangtok .

= = Demographics = =

According to the Provisional Population Totals 2011 census of India , the population of Gangtok Municipal Corporation has been estimated to be 98 @, @ 658 . Males constituted 53 % of the population and females 47 % . The Gangtok subdivision of the East Sikkim district had a population of 281 @, @ 293 , Gangtok has an average literacy rate of 82 @. @ 17 % , higher than the national

average of 74 % : male literacy is 85 @. @ 33 % , and female literacy is 78 @. @ 68 . About 8 % of Gangtok 's population live in the nine notified slums and squatter settlements , all on Government land . More people live in areas that depict slum @- @ like characteristics but have not been notified as slums yet because they have developed on private land . Of the total urban population of Sikkim , Gangtok Municipal Corporation has a share of 55 @. @ 5 % . Including Gangtok , East District has a share of 88 % of the total urban population . The quality of life , the pace of development and availability of basic infrastructure and employment prospects has been the major cause for rapid migration to the city . With this migration , the urban services are under pressure , intensified by the lack of availability of suitable land for infrastructure development .

Ethnic Nepalis , who settled in the region during British rule , comprise the majority of Gangtok 's residents . Lepchas , native to the land , and Bhutias also constitute a sizeable portion of the populace . Additionally , a large number of Tibetans have immigrated to the town . Immigrant resident communities not native to the region include the Marwaris , who own most of the shops ; the Biharis , who are employed in mostly blue collar jobs and the Bengalis .

Hinduism and Buddhism are the most significant religions in Gangtok . Gangtok also has a sizeable Christian population and a small Muslim minority . The North East Presbyterian Church , Roman Catholic Church and Anjuman Mosque in Gangtok are places of worship for the religious minorities . The town has not been communist , having never witnessed any sort of inter @- @ religious strife in its history . Nepali is the most widely spoken language in Sikkim as well as Gangtok . English and Hindi being the official language of Sikkim and India respectively , are also widely spoken and understood in most of Sikkim , particularly in Gangtok . Other languages spoken in Gangtok include Bhutia (Sikkimese) , Tibetan and Lepcha .

= = Culture = =

Apart from the major religious festivals of Dashain , Tihar , Christmas , Holi etc . , the diverse ethnic populace of the town celebrates several local festivals . The Lepchas and Bhutias celebrate new year in January , while Tibetans celebrate the new year (Losar) with " Devil Dance " in January ? February . The Maghe sankranti , Ram Navami are some of the important Nepalese festivals . Chotrul Duchen , Buddha Jayanti , the birthday of the Dalai Lama , Loosong , Bhumchu , Saga Dawa , Lhabab Duechen and Drupka Teshi are some other festivals , some distinct to local culture and others shared with the rest of India , Nepal , Bhutan and Tibet .

A popular food in Gangtok is the momo , a steamed dumpling containing pork , beef and vegetables cooked in a doughy wrapping and served with watery soup . Wai @- @ Wai is a packaged snack consisting of noodles which are eaten either dry or in soup form . A form of noodle called thukpa , served in soup form is also popular in Gangtok . Other noodle @- @ based foods such as the chowmein , thenthuk , fakthu , gyathuk and wonton are available . Other traditional Sikkimese cuisine include shah @- @ phaley (Sikkimese patties with spiced minced meat in a crisp samosa @- @ like case) and Gack @- @ ko soup . Restaurants offer a wide variety of traditional Indian , continental and Chinese cuisines to cater to the tourists . Churpee , a kind of hard cheese made from cow 's or yak 's milk is sometimes chewed . Chhang is a local frothy millet beer traditionally served in bamboo tankards and drunk through bamboo or cane straws . Alcohol is cheap due to low excise duty in Sikkim . Beer , whiskey , rum and brandy are frequently consumed by both locals and non @- @ locals .

Residents of Sikkim are music lovers and it is common to hear Western rock music being played in homes and restaurants . Hindi pop songs are also common . Indigenous Nepali rock , music suffused with a western rock beat and Nepali lyrics , is particularly popular .

Football (soccer) , cricket and archery are the most popular sports in Gangtok . The Paljor Stadium , which hosts football matches , is the sole sporting ground in the city . Thangka ? a notable handicraft ? is an elaborately hand painted religious scroll in brilliant colours drawn on fabric hung in a monastery or a family altar and occasionally carried by monks in ceremonial processions . Chhaams are vividly costumed monastic dances performed on ceremonial and festive occasions , especially in the monasteries during the Tibetan new year .

== City institutions ==

A centre of Buddhist learning and culture , Gangtok 's most notable Buddhist institutions are the Enchey monastery , the Do @-@ drul Chorten stupa complex and the Rumtek Monastery . The Enchey monastery is the city 's oldest monastery and is the seat of the Nyingma order . The two @-@ hundred @-@ year @-@ old baroque monastery houses images of gods , goddesses , and other religious artifacts . In the month of January , the Chaam , or masked dance , is performed with great fanfare . The Dro @-@ dul Chorten is a stupa which was constructed in 1945 by Trulshik Rimpoché , head of the Nyingma order of Tibetan Buddhism . Inside this stupa are complete set of relics , holy books , and mantras . Surrounding the edifice are 108 Mani Lhakor , or prayer wheels . The complex also houses a religious school .

The Rumtek Monastery on the outskirts of the town is one of Buddhism 's most sacred monasteries . The monastery is the seat of the Kagyu order , one of the major Tibetan sects , and houses some of the world 's most sacred and rare Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and religious objects in its reliquary . Constructed in the 1960s , the building is modeled after a similar monastery in Lhasa , Tibet . Rumtek was the focus of international media attention in 2000 after the seventeenth Karmapa , one of the four holiest lamas , fled Lhasa and sought refuge in the monastery .

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology , better known as the Tibetology Museum , houses a huge collection of masks , Buddhist scriptures , statues , and tapestries . It has over two hundred Buddhist icons , and is a centre of study of Buddhist philosophy .

The Thakurbari Temple , located in the heart of the city , established in 1935 on a prime piece of land donated by the then Maharaja of Sikkim is one of the oldest and best known Hindu temple in the city . The Ganesh Tok and the Hanuman Tok , dedicated to the Hindu gods Ganpati and Hanuman and housing important Hindu deities , are located in the upper reaches of the city .

The Himalayan Zoological Park exhibits the fauna of the Himalayas in their natural habitats . The zoo features the Himalayan black bear , the barking deer , the snow leopard , the leopard cat , Tibetan wolf , masked palm civet , red pandas and the spotted deer amongst the others . Jawaharlal Nehru Botanical Gardens , near Rumtek , houses many species of orchid and as many as fifty different species of tree , including many oaks .

== Education ==

Gangtok 's schools are either run by the state government or by private and religious organizations . Schools mainly use English and Nepali as their medium of instruction . The schools are either affiliated with the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education , Central Board of Secondary Education or the National Institute of Open Schooling . Notable schools include the Tashi Namgyal Academy , Paljor Namgyal Girls School , Taktse International School and Kendriya Vidyalaya .

Colleges conferring graduate degrees include Sikkim Government College , Sikkim Government Law College and Damber Singh College . Sikkim University established in 2007 is functioning in Gangtok ; the university has been allotted land in neighbouring Yang Yang town for establishment of its own campus . The university offers a diverse range of courses and has a number of institutes affiliated to it . 8 km (5 @. @ 0 mi) from here is the headquarters of the Sikkim Manipal University , which houses Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences and Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology . The Indira Gandhi National Open University also has a regional center in the city . There are other institutions offering diplomas in Buddhist literature , catering and other non @-@ mainstream fields . District Institute of Education and Training and State Institute of Education conduct teacher training programs . Students usually go to large cities in the vicinity such as Siliguri or Kolkata in pursuit of higher education . Naropa University also oversees a semester abroad program located in Gangtok . Do not confuse with Sikkim University and Sikkim Manipal University . Both are different .

== Media ==

More than 50 newspapers are published in Sikkim . Multiple local Nepali and English newspapers are published , whereas regional and national Hindi and English newspapers , printed elsewhere in India , are also circulated . The English newspapers include The Statesman and The Telegraph , which are printed in Siliguri ; The Hindu and The Times of India , which are printed in Kolkata . Sikkim Herald , the newsweekly of the Government of Sikkim is published in thirteen languages of the state .

Gangtok has two cinema halls featuring Nepali , Hindi and English @-@ language films . The town also has a public library .

There are Internet cafés in and around the city , but broadband connectivity is limited . Satellite dishes exist in most homes in the region and the channels available throughout India are also available here , along with a few Nepali @-@ language channels . The main service providers are Sikkim Cable , Nayuma , Dish TV and Doordarshan . All India Radio has a local station in Gangtok , which transmits various programs of mass interest . Along that , other three fm stations Nine fm , Radio Misty and Red fm are the four radio stations in the city . BSNL , Reliance and Airtel have the three largest cellular networks in the town . There is a Doordarshan TV station in Gangtok .