

Enchey Monastery – A Spiritual & Cultural Gem of Sikkim



Short Description

Enchey Monastery, known as the “Solitary Temple,” lies about 3 km northeast of Gangtok. Belonging to the Nyingma order of Tibetan Buddhism, it was built in its present form around 1909. Famous for its vibrant masked Cham dances, rich murals, and views over Gangtok and the Kanchenjunga range, it is a tranquil spiritual retreat deeply embedded in local legend.

Overview

- **Founded:** Originally in the 1840s by the 8th Chogyal, rebuilt ~1909 under Sikyong Tulku Namgyal
 - **Order:** Nyingma sect of Vajrayana Buddhism
 - **Surroundings:** Hilltop ridge above Gangtok, surrounded by coniferous trees and forest; panoramic views of Gangtok city and Kanchendzonga peaks on clear days
 - **Highlights:** Golden cupola, ornate murals and paintings, prayer hall, large collection of masks for ritual dances, serene ambiance, devout local importance
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Festivals & Events

- **When:** 18th & 19th day of the 12th lunar month (usually January/February) – *Detor Cham* masked dance festival.
- **Occasion:** Cham dances are ritual offerings; also *Pang Lhabsol*, marking unity between Lepcha & Bhutia communities with Khangchendzonga as witness. *Singhe Chaam* occurs every three years.
- **Attractions:** Masked monks in vivid costumes; depiction of deities like Mahakala & mythical snow lions; traditional music; devotional rituals; strong cultural significance among locals and visitors alike.



Architecture & Attractions

- Built in a style combining Tibetan and Sikkimese influences, with a **Chinese-pagoda look** after renovation in ~1909; original foundations date to the 1840s.
- Golden finial / cupola on top; richly painted windows; elaborately carved pillars; murals covering the walls (four religious kings, deities from cardinal directions, many Mahayana deities)
- Prayer hall with images of Buddha, Guru Padmasambhava, and other deities; manuscripts stored in almirahs.

- Collection of ritual masks used for festivals; colourful prayer flags; carved, painted windows; a good library.



Spiritual Importance

- Revered spot because **Lama Druptob Karpo** is said to have flown from Maenam Hill and meditated (had a hermitage) at the site. The place is believed to have strong protective deities (Khangchendzonga, Yabdean, Mahakala) watching over it.
- Considered one of the oldest and significant seats of the Nyingma lineage in Sikkim. People believe visiting offers blessings, inner peace, and merit.

Quick Facts

- **Location:** 3 km northeast of Gangtok, on Nathula-Gangtok road, perched on a ridge overlooking the city.
- **Built / Rebuilt:** Originally ~1840s, current structure ~1909-1910 under Sikyong Tulku Namgyal.
- **Sect:** Nyingma, Vajrayana Buddhism
- **Number of Monks:** Approximately 90 monks reside there.

- **Architecture Style:** Chinese pagoda influenced; golden cupola & ornate woodcarving & mural arts.
- **Festivals:** Detor Cham (every year), Singhe Chaam (every three years), Pang Lhabsol etc.
- **Visiting Hours:** Generally ~9:00 AM to 5:00 PM / 6:00 PM depending on source.
- **Entry Fee:** No entry fee in many sources.