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Trip Report Sikkim Old Silk Route (Nov 2013)

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Nov 18th, 2013, 19:07

#1

**Chandrali Chandra**
MemberJoin Date: Feb 2010
Location: Kolkata
Posts: 52**[NJP – Sillery Gaon - Rishikhola - Zuluk – Gnathang - Makhim – NJP](#)**

I have just returned from **Sikkim Old Silk Route Trip**. Had a great journey due to excellent weather Everyday we enjoyed watching Mt Kanchenjunga for the whole day without any cloud. **Sunrise Time : 5:50 am & Sunset Time : 4:45 pm**. Also able to see snow everywhere after Tukla Valley. I think this is the best time to visit this route. Contacted Dilip Tamang for the tour. Both Dilip Tamang (our Tour Arranger) and Dawa Tamang (our tour driver) are excellent person. Dawa took extra initiative to show each and every spot whereas Dilipji called us frequently to find everything is going on properly.

[Our Itinerary \(4 nights / 5 Days\)](#)

09/11/2013 – Reach NJP by Darjeeling Mail. Proceed to **Sillery Gaon (N/S)** - 6000 ft

10/11/2013 – Sillery Gaon via Reshi khola to **Zuluk (N/S)** - 9500 ft

11/11/2013 – Sunrise at Sunrise Point, Lungthung near Laxmi Chowk. Other S/S till Tsangu Lake & back to **Gnathang (N/S)** - 12700 ft

12/11/2013 – Gnathang via Aritar to **Mankhim (N/S)** - 6500 ft
13/11/2013 – Mankhim to NJP

Day wise Detailed Information

9th Nov, 2013 (Saturday)

Our train Darjeeling Mail reached NJP at the right time. Waited 15 mins for our driver Manikumar to pick up us for Sillery Gaon. The route was :

NJP via Bypass, 79 km Kalimpong 14 km Algarah 2 km 20 Miles 4 km, ½ hr Sillery Gaon (Total 99 km, 4½ hrs)

At 20 Miles (which is in between Algarah & Pedong) we took left for Sillery. The road is not metallic so it is really very bumpy. Later when I said to Dilipji that we have to inform Mamatadi (WB Govt) to make this road metallic, he objected. He does not want the road to be metallic as it will destroy Sillery's beauty - more pollution, plastic will be seen as more tourist will come if the road becomes good.

There are many homestay but I think Dilipji's Nirmala Village Resort is in the best position for viewing Mt.Kanchenjunga. Nirmala has around 10 rooms and a newly constructed one has a fireplace too. Met Dilipji's family who are always ready to help you. The total range of Mt Kanchenjunga is shining brightly, which could be seen from our rooms also.





1) Dilip Tamang's Family 2) Driver Dawa,Dilip Tamang & my husband

After lunch, we left for Ramitey View Point which is 1½ km (30 mins) easy trek. We saw Teesta 14 turns - could not take good photographs due to mist, but enjoyed good sunset.



Teesta at Ramitey ViewPoint



Sunset at Sillery Gaon

Other short trek spots are Damsang Fort (fort of last Lepcha King), Silent Valley & Tinchuley.

10th Nov, 2013 (Sunday)

We got up early at around 4:30 am for going to Ramitey View Point for sunrise with other guests. But we saw everybody was fast asleep. So we did not disturb them. We also decline to go there as it will be risky for a couple to trek in this darkness. We saw an excellent sunrise from Nirmala only. After breakfast, we left for Zuluk.





Sunrise from Nirmala Homestay, Sillery

Sillery Gaon 4 km, ½ hr 20 Miles 2 km, 10 min Pedong 15 km, 50 min Rishi (Sikkim Entry Gate) 21 km, 1 hr Rongli 8 km, 15 min Lingtam 15 km, 30 min Padamchen 10 km, 20 min Zuluk (**Total 75 km**)

We planned to visit ReshiKhola (1700 ft) on our way. It is the border of West Bengal & Sikkim. Mukum Khola from WB & Reshi Khola from Sikkim meets at Reshi Bridge (border connection road) and flows as Reshikhola bordering both the states. It is very hot at this place due to low altitude.

While entering Sikkim at Reshi, our driver submitted our ID proof. We proceeded towards Rongli for permit. We informed our driver to get the permit till Tsongo Lake as we may visit there.

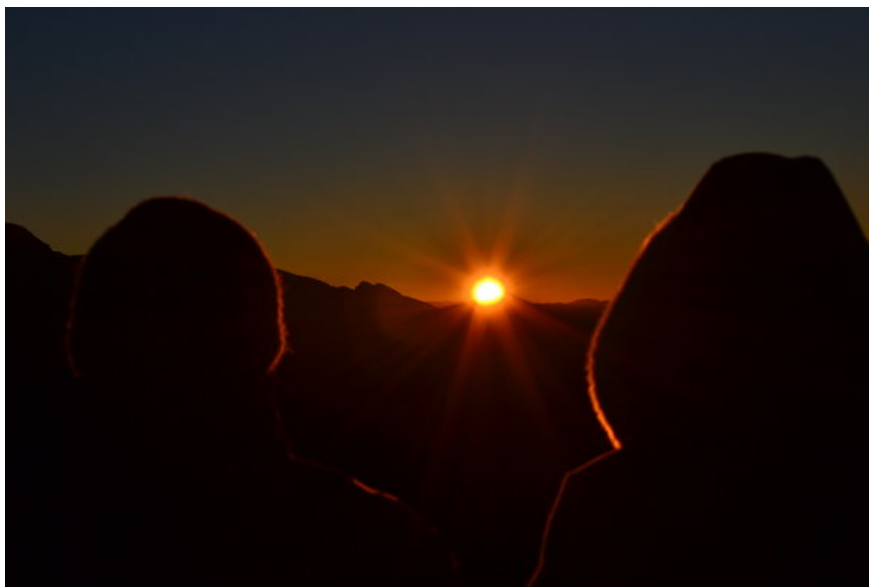
At Rongli, we met a group of 4 persons (2 couples one is Indian and other one stays in USA) whom we met last night at Sillery Gaon. The USA couple's husband is Bengali (Mr. Mukherjee) who married a foreigner. I said them at that time that they will not be allowed to enter Zuluk as one of them is foreigner but they said that she is now Mrs Mukherjee and their tour arranger (Spring Vale) assured them that it will not be problem. They were before us for permit. Rongli Police was not allowed to issue them permit and they continue forcing them for which we got late in getting the permit. They tried again in Rangpo but failed.

After spending 2 hrs at Rongli we left for Zuluk. This permit is checked at Lingtam, Padamchen & Kupup. On way, you can visit Keukhola Falls in between Lingtam & Padamchen. When we reached Zuluk, it was already 4 pm and we were hungry like anything. But lunch was served quickly as Mr Sherpa Passang (our Palizor Homestay owner) with his family was traveling with us from Rongli, who informed his mother to get it ready.

After quick lunch, we ran to Zuluk helipad for sunset. Palizon Homestay is nearby to Helipad where as Gopal Pradhan's homestay is at the bottom and you have to climb a long way to reach there.

11th Nov, 2013 (Monday)

We got up early and started at 4:30 am for Sunrise at **Sunrise Point, Lungthung**, near Laxmi Chowk (**17 kms, 50 min from Zuluk**). It is really awesome and amazing to see so many colours before sunrise. The sunrise effect on Mt Kanchenjunga is mind-blowing: no words to explain. While returning back to Zuluk for breakfast we stopped at Bhool Bhulaiya Point to see the 95 turn zigzag road.



Sunrise at Lungthung

We were introduced to Gopal Pradhan (owner of Dil Maya Retreat, Zuluk) at Sunrise Point. Here I came to know that he is mainly a driver. After studying the tourist interest while he was a driver in Gangtok, he thought of starting this own business in this route. He is very jovial person and quite informative.

After breakfast, we left Zuluk and started for other sightseeing. The points which come one after another are mentioned below :

- a) Zigzag Point (7 km)
- b) Thambi View Point (13 km) – 10,500 ft – **here you can see both zigzag road as well as Mt Kanchenjunga full range clearly**

c) Bhool Bhulaiya (15½ Km)



d) Sunrise Point (17 km) – 12,500 ft

e) Lungthung (18 km)

f) Laxmi Chowk (20 km) - **here you have to turn left for Gnathang which is 2 km inside**

g) View Point to see Gnathang Valley

h) Tukla Valley - 13,000 ft - **started to see snow from here**

i) Kalapokhri Lake

j) Old Baba Mandir

k) Jeelep-La Pass (far away) - 14,300 ft.

l) Kupup / Elephant Lake (34 km) - 13,900 ft



m) Yak Golf course/ Ice Hockey Ground / Water Polo Pool -13,025ft

n) Kupup Check Post/Village – can purchase Chinese products here

o) Memenchuk Lake -12,500 ft

p) New Baba Mandir

q) Hangu Lake (**saw good mountain shadow in the lake water**)

r) Manju Lake - 14,400 ft (Chinese Indian Trading Centre) –

Nathula Pass is 4 km from this point Chinese purchase Dalda, Sugar etc from Indians whereas Indian Trader purchase clothes, woolen materials etc. from them. Chinese cannot stay - they have to leave for China on that very day. These trading takes place from Monday to Thursday. So there is heavy traffic chaos at this point.

s) Tsangu Lake -12,400 ft (**visited thrice - but this time without**)

any fog, even in late afternoon... totally clear lake)

At 3:30 pm, we returned to Gnathang for night stay at Phinasa Lodge. From morning onwards even at Zuluk, there was no electricity in this route. Also our Vodafone connection was down due to tower problem. We were worried as we could not charge our camera battery also. In the evening we started feeling the coldness over here. The night was horrible with no electricity, chilling weather and severe headache. But our lodge's owner, Ms Pema was ready to help you always in this weather. As the dinning hall was adjacent to Daftar Bunglow (a little far away from Phinasa Lodge), the evening tea-snacks and the dinner was served at our room only.

There are 3 four-bedded rooms in Daftar Bunglow with fireplace in each room. In Phinasa Lodge, there are 3 rooms but no fireplace. There was no running tap water as it was freeze to ice.

12th Nov, 2013 (Tuesday)

In the morning, when we went out to visit the **Krishna Temple & Gnathang Monastery** we saw ice everywhere. A bucket of water has turned to ice – the flowing water has become ice.... We saw a monk trying hard to remove a bucket which has been stuck in ice.

After breakfast in Daftar Bunglow's Dinning hall, we left for Mankhim. The route taken was :

Gnathang 22 km Zuluk 10 km Padamchen 15 km Lingtam 8 km Rongli 3 km Rate Khola 9 km Aritar 3 km Mankhim **(Total 70 kms)**

At Rate Khola, we took left to Aritar. We visited **Lampokhari Lake, Aritar Gumpa & Dakbanglow**. Then we left for Mankhim. The road from Aritar to Mankhim is again not metallic.

We were impressed by seeing our cottage in Shantikunj. They are really good. After lunch, we went to a gallery attached to the Shantikunj from where you can clearly view Mt Kanchenjunga. After waiting for an hour, we enjoyed the excellent sunset.

From Mankhim, Mt Kanchenjunga is far away whereas in Lungthung, it is in handshake distance.

13th Nov, 2013 (Wednesday)

Again, we saw sunrise in the early morning at Mankhim. Then after breakfast we went to **Mankhim Top**. You have to climb around 250 stairs (next to Shantikunj) to reach there.

At Mankhim Top there is a temple & Aritar/Lampokhari Lake looks like boot shape from here.

We left for NJP after coming down. The route was :

Mankhim 3 km Aritar 6 km Rhenock 20 km Rangpo 19 km Melli 4 km Teesta 29 km Coronation Bridge 25 km Siliguri 14 km NJP **(Total 120 km, 4½ hrs).**

Costing (for 2 persons)

Food & Lodging : Rs.700 x 4 days x 2 persons = Rs.5600

Car (Bolero) Rate : Rs.3000 x 5 days = Rs.15000
 Sunrise Point – Rs.1000 (extra to driver)
 Tsangu Lake – Rs.1000 (extra to driver)
 Permit – Rs.200 per head
Total – Rs. 23,000/-

Pickup Driver from NJP to Sillery Gaon – Mr Manikumar (M : 9635836535) – nice person

Rest of Tour Driver – Mr Dawa Gyalpo Tamang (M : 9609872995, Res.8001936790) – excellent driver – kind, energetic, helpful and knowledgeable. He also conducts tour in this route.

Some Good Homestay Contacts

SILLERY GAON

- 1) Nirmala Village Resort – owner Dilip Tamang (M : 9635005318, 933922859, 7602040018)
- 2) Renu Homestay – 9800486608, 9800800399
- 3) Heavenly Valley Homestay – owner Spring Vale Resort (66/3 Bondel Road, Kol-19, M: 9830147718/ 9143058689)

MANKHIM

- 1) Shantikunj – owner Santosh Gurung (M : 9733031792)
- 2) Kanchendzonga Mirror – owner G S Rai (M : 9679917717)

ZULUK

- 1) Dil Maya Retreat - owner Gopal Pradhan (M : 9609860266)
- 2) Hidden Paradise (next to DMR) – owner Gopal Pradhan's son
- 3) Palizor Homestay – owner Sherpa Passang (M : 9734150546 / 9733188456)

NATHANG (only 2 and both are taken care by Ms.Pema)

- 1) Daftar Bunglow – owner Spring Vale Resort
- 2) Pinasha Home Stay – owner Ms Pema, M : 9474145958

All the abovementioned persons can arrange the total tour for this route.

For Permit

To enter Zuluk, every visitor requires a permit. The permit is issued in SDPO Rongli on working days and on holidays Rongli Police Station does it. **One Stamp size photograph + 2 photocopies of ID Proof are required.** Foreigners cannot enter Zuluk due to Army imposed restrictions. Also note that if you want to proceed towards Tsangu Lake & Gangtok then it should be mentioned in your permit.

Last edited by Chandrali Chandra; Nov 19th, 2013 at 00:55..

QUOTE

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