

West & South Sikkim by Bike – 12 days

Bicycle tour with jeep support

Tour JTT-SI-BC01: Delhi - Bagdogra - Siliguri - Kurseong - Darjeeling - Pelling/Pemayangtse - Kechophari - Yuksom - Kewzing – Rumtek – Gangtok - Kalimpong - Bagdogra - Delhi

Best time: Mid-Sept – Mid-May

Activities & sights: bicycling, Sikkim's subtropical and alpine forests, 'Bhutia ('Tibetan') and Lepcha culture, Buddhist monasteries, Himalayan views, village culture.

This mountain biking itinerary offers an exclusive experience of Sikkim and Darjeeling, its people and mountains and its fascinating flora and fauna. Most of the biking is done on remote roads, avoiding dense traffic routes, that wind their way through the lush countryside and forests. On this itinerary you will get a very good overview of the land and people



of Sikkim, its Buddhist monasteries, different tribal cultures. Occasionally you will get very good views of the Khangchenjunga (8485 m) and other Himalayan peaks. Your accommodation is a mix of pleasant homestays, 'different' ecoresorts and comfortable hotels.

Itinerary

Day 01: Delhi → Bagdogra – Siliguri (driving 20 km/ 0.5 hr)

Early morning, you'll board the 2-hour flight from Delhi to Bagdogra (access is also possible from Kolkata). You will be assisted on arrival at Bagdogra airport and then transferred to Siliguri, not far from Bagdogra. Here you can check your gear and assemble your bikes (assuming you bring your own bikes). Overnight at Siliguri Hotel.

Day 2: Siliguri - Kurseong (biking 40 km/ 4 hrs)

After breakfast we start biking to Kurseong. The distance covered today is only about 40 km. The first 25 kms is almost level as it is still in the plains, but the last 15 km is uphill till Kurseong. Overnight at Cochrane Place in Kurseong, a hotel located on a ridge amidst lush tea gardens.

Day 3: Kurseong - Chimney - Darjeeling (40 km/ 4 hrs)

From Cochrane Place we ride up to the Deer Park and onwards to the village of Chimney. Bypassing the main road to Darjeeling we bike through a pleasant forest road till Jorebungalow where we meet the main road again. Overnight at Darjeeling.

Day 4: Darjeeling- Pelling via Jorethang (80 km/ 3-5 hrs biking)

The total distance today is about 80 km and we do part of it by jeep and part by bikes. Part of the trip will be biking approx. 27 km through the Tukvar Valley over a narrow downhill road amidst the tea plantations. This brings us to Jorethang, a small town in Sikkim. From here we can take the jeeps for about 25 km till a little beyond Legship, and ride again uphill for another 20 km to Pelling where we stay the night.



The Pemayangtse Monastery, in Pemayangtse, founded by Lama Lhatsun Chempo in 1705, is one of the oldest and most famous monasteries of west Sikkim. The Monastery is located on a ridge top above Pelling and is accessed by walking the steep hilly track of 4 km (2.5 mi), which traverses through rich forest cover. Of particular note is a seven-tiered painted wooden structure portraying Guru Rimpoche's Heavenly Palace known as 'Sangthokpalri' also spelt 'Zandog-palri', on the top floor of the monastery. After this, you can continue walking to the Sanga Choeling monastery. The literal meaning of Sanga Choeling is the 'island of esoteric teachings'. Built in 1697, it is also known as the place of secret spells. It has clay statues dating back to the 17th century.

Day 5: Pelling – Kechopalri – Yuksom (87 km/ 3-5 hrs biking)

After visiting the famous Pemayangtse monastery, we ride on to Yuksom, the ancient capital of Sikkim and en route we visit the Kechopalri Lake (also known as Kechophari Lake). Again, part of the distance can be done by car. Overnight in Yuksom.



Day 6: Yuksom - Tashiding – Kewzing (49 km/ 2.5 – 3.5 hrs)

Today's ride is a moderate one in terms of distance and climbing. The first part, from Yuksom to Tashiding is all downhill. We'll

visit the spectacularly located Tashiding monastery. After crossing the Rangit river over a hanging bridge, we ride uphill all the way to Kewzing village, where we stay overnight at local homestay in the Village.

Against a backdrop of a magnificent view of the mountains, Kewzing is a typical quiet Bhutia village. Located 8 kms from Ravangla in South Sikkim, it is a quiet hamlet of some thirty houses, with the residents predominantly Buddhist. The accommodation is simple but neat and comfortable and wholesome local food is served from the family kitchen.

Day 7: At Kewzing, daytrip (25 km/ 2 hrs)

Today we don't move base. We'll do some easy biking from Kewzing to Ravangla and Ralang monastery, a distance of about 11 to 13 kms one way. There, we'll visit Ralang monastery and the Buddha Park in Ravangla. The rest of the day you can just relax in the village.

Day 8: Kewzing – Singtam – Rumtek (57 km/ 3.5 – 4.5 hrs)

Today we ride to Rumtek via Singtam. The 36 kms road till Singtam is all downhill. From Singtam it is 14 kms uphill till the village of Sang and then 7 kms almost level till Rumtek. Rumtek Gompa (Monastery) was built by the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa in the 1960's as a replica of the Tshurphu monastery, the original home of the Karmapas (a Buddhist order) in Tibet. The monastery is also the headquarters for the Dharma Chakra Centres, the world over housing rare and antique pieces of Buddhist art. There is also an Institute of Higher Buddhist Learning in the monastery complex.

Overnight is at Teen Taley Eco Resort, which is not a regular hotel but more like a home stay with its own organic gardens. There is a 1 km trail within the resort grounds for bird lovers.



Day 9: Rumtek - Rankha – Gangtok (35 km/ 2-3 hrs)

Today we cycle for about 35 kms via Rankha to Gangtok. The Rankha Monastery is a relatively new one but the location in a forested area is beautiful. Later, we continue to Gangtok. Overnight hotel in Gangtok.

Day 10: At Gangtok

Today no biking, at least not if you don't want to. Early morning, we wake up to witness a spectacular sunrise of the Kanchenjunga massif from Tashi View Point, which is located 16 kms from Gangtok. We return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later, we visit the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology. In 1957, the 14th Dalai Lama laid the foundation stone of this architectural wonder that houses a huge collection of rare Sanskrit, Lepcha and Tibetan manuscripts, sculptures, treasured artifacts and Buddhist icons.

Next point will be the Do Drul Chorten the biggest stupa in Sikkim, located on the hill hock, adjacent to the Tibetology Institute. Popularly known as Phurba, this stupa was built in 1945.

We will also visit the Cottage Industries Centre to see the local handicrafts of Sikkim and the Flower Show. Last, we will visit the Enchey Monastery, a Nyingma Monastery believed to have been built by a monk with flying powers. In the evening, we walk around M.G. Marg, the heart of Gangtok city.

Day 11: Gangtok - Rangpo - Kalimpong (60 km/ 3 hrs)

We cycle for about 60 kms down to the town of Kalimpong. Most of the road will be down-hill coasting But the last few kilometers are steep uphill. Overnight hotel in Kalimpong.

Day 12: Kalimpong – Bagdogra ✈ Delhi (

The jeep will take us back to Bagdogra, where the tour ends.

Drive for 3-4 hrs to the airport at Bagdogra for onward flight.

Entry formalities

Please note that all foreign nationals need Restricted Area Permit (RAP) to visit Sikkim. Validity is normally for 2 weeks, but can be extended upto 45 days in Gangtok. This permit will be issued at the interstate border when entering Sikkim. Two passport size photographs and a copy of the passport and visum for India are required. The visa is offered free of cost.

Tour Price

For 2 persons: INR 85.000 per person
For 3, 4 persons: INR 71.500 per person
For 5 persons: INR 74.500 per person
For 6 persons: INR 70.000 per person

Single supplement: INR 12.600 per person.

Above tour price is on current rates only, valid throughout 2014. Tour price may rise, however, in case of increase of flight prices or price of car fuel.

Price includes: Flights Delhi – Bagdogra and Bagdogra - Delhi, English speaking escort throughout, escort car for luggage transport, bike transport if necessary as well as car for transport of participants, all accommodation on twin-sharing basis, MAP (breakfast and lunch included, starting with dinner on day 01, ending with breakfast on day 12) fuel and driver allowance, all entrance fees at sights.

Price excludes: International airfare, overnight stay at Delhi if required, tips, laundry, alcoholic beverages, insurance and any other expenses of personal nature.

Hotels used:

Siliguri:	Hotel Central Plaza or Marina's Motel
Kurseong:	Cochrane Place
Darjeeling:	Hotel Viceroy or Dekeling Resort or similar
Pelling:	Norbu Ghang Resort or similar
Yuksom:	Red Palace or similar
Rumtek:	Teen Taley
Gangtok:	Hidden Forest or similar
Kalimpong:	Himalayan Hotel or Orchid Retreat or Park Hotel