



REFLECTIONS OF EAST INDIA

From fragrant tea plantations and snow-capped Himalayan peaks to bustling bazaars and the grandest colonial architecture, discover the hidden wonders of East India.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



India, Indian Subcontinent



10 days from AU\$7,510 pp



Private

Journey Overview

From fragrant tea plantations and snow-capped Himalayan peaks to bustling bazaars and the grandest colonial architecture, discover the hidden wonders of East India. Lose yourself in the soulful city of Kolkata, abuzz with intellect and creativity. Venture into striking Sikkim and see firsthand why this petite state was once regarded as a utopia. Delight in Gangtok's tapestry of mountain scenery and Buddhist spiritualism. Wander through tea plantations. And make the train journey of a lifetime on the famous Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.

Journey Highlights

- Immerse yourself in the vibrant city of Kolkata
- Explore the wondrous world of Darjeeling tea at Glenburn Tea Estate
- Witness a glowing sunrise over the world's third tallest mountain
- Ride the famous Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Find sanctuary in some of the most atmospheric hotels in India



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Kolkata

Sbāgata and welcome to Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. Vibrant, uplifting and extremely friendly, Kolkata is perhaps the most soulful city in India. During the British Raj Calcutta, as it was known, was the Jewel of the East and the Indian capital until 1911. Today it is still the most important city in the east, with a rich intellectual and cultural heritage. Receive a warm A&K welcome on arrival and transfer privately to your hotel.

Glenburn, The Penthouse Kolkata

Day 2: Kolkata

Immerse yourself in city life with an early morning visit to the vibrant flower market under the famous Howrah Bridge. Wind through the mountains of marigolds and jasmine, then follow in the footsteps of the British Raj with a tour of colonial Kolkata. See Dalhousie Square, now known as B.B.D. Bagh, in the political heart of the city. Admire the colonial buildings, including the prominent Writers' Building, surrounded by food vendors selling mouth-watering street foods.

Continue to the revered Mother Teresa House, established in 1950 to care for the poor and sick. Learn of her ideologies and take a closer look at how Mother Teresa lived. Then sample traditional recipes from both sides of the border as well as Anglo-Indian and colonial cuisine with lunch at Oh! Calcutta. Later, immerse yourself in the serenity of the Victoria Memorial Hall. Admire the domed white marble hall built in memory of Queen Victoria. Stroll through the splendid gardens and step inside to discover Victorian memorabilia and British Raj-era paintings. End the day in the Maidan, the city's largest urban park and the "lungs of Kolkata", watching as people come together over a game of cricket.

Glenburn, The Penthouse Kolkata | Meals: BL

Day 3: Kolkata

Head into the artisan hub of Kumartuli. Wander the maze of winding lanes in this 400-year-old village and watch as elaborately painted idols of Hindu gods and goddesses are produced for Durga Puja festivities. Board a tram and wind through the narrow streets and observe hawkers selling local products. Later, explore downtown on foot, revelling in the lively atmosphere at Kolkata market, filled with everything from vivid textiles to flowers, spices and teas. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure before an evening of unique Bengali hospitality in the home of Bomti Iyengar, a charming art collector and bon vivant who lives in a great heritage building. Join him for an evening of cooking, feasting and stories, surrounded by his eclectic art collection.

Glenburn, The Penthouse Kolkata | Meals: BD

Day 4: Kolkata - Bagdogra - Kalimpong

Transfer privately to the airport and fly to Bagdogra, then journey overland to Kalimpong. A bustling bazaar town, this Himalayan hill station offers a fascinating history as part of the Sikkim Empire, fine Buddhist monasteries, and stimulating walks. Soak up the atmosphere with an evening stroll to the local market, discovering fresh cheese, handmade paper wares and traditional handicrafts.

Mayfair Himalayan Spa Resort Kalimpong | Meals: B

Day 5: Kalimpong - Gangtok

Venture to Zang-Dhok-Palri Phodang, the area's largest and most beautiful monastery and breathe in the exotic fragrances of the colourful flower nursery filled with rare orchids and cacti. Later, journey to the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok. Once an important transit point for traders travelling between Tibet and India, today Gangtok is a cosmopolitan centre famous for its magnificent views of Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest mountain. Check in to your hotel and spend your afternoon exploring your accommodation and the intriguing surrounds at leisure.

Mayfair Spa Resort Gangtok | Meals: BL

Day 6: Gangtok

Today, uncover layers of Buddhist and Tibetan culture, beginning at the Rumtek Monastery, the richest Buddhist monastic centre in India housing some of the world's rarest and most unique religious artefacts. Move on to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and lose yourself in a vast collection of rare manuscripts, statues, and tapestries. Admire the varied and vibrant handicrafts of local craftsmen at the Government Institute of Cottage Industries, then spend your afternoon at leisure, relaxing in your hotel's spa facilities, wandering along MG Road dotted with cafes and bazaars or partaking in an optional activity (additional charge). You could choose to try your hand at a momo cooking class or take a tour of the 200-year-old Enchey Monastery where you might be lucky enough to witness Chaam, a religious masked dance.

Mayfair Spa Resort Gangtok | Meals: B

Day 7: Gangtok - Darjeeling

Rise early to capture the glowing sunrise over Kanchenjunga, this magnificent mountain towering 8,568 metres above sea level. Return to your hotel for breakfast, then journey through cardamom crop, ginger plantations and paddy fields to Darjeeling. The crown jewel of British colonial hill stations nestled high in the Himalayas, Darjeeling is home to almost a quarter of India's tea production. Your perfect platform for discovery is the Glenburn Tea Estate, a heavenly plantation retreat that lies on a hillock above the banks of the River Rungeet.

Glenburn Tea Estate | Meals: BD

Day 8: Darjeeling

Darjeeling's rich tapestry of cultures is yours to explore today. Start at the Ghoom Monastery, with its colourful prayer flags fluttering in the wind. Continue to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, founded in 1954, just after Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first scaled Everest. Visit the Darjeeling Zoo, home of the Snow Leopard Breeding Centre. Then see locals making handicrafts and carpets at the Tibetan Refugee Centre. This afternoon enjoy a breathtaking ride on the heritage-listed small-gauge Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, or "Toy Train", to Ghoom, India's highest railway station. The toy train is a marvel of engineering passing through many small towns and is India's oldest mountain railway route.

Glenburn Tea Estate | Meals: BLD

Day 9: Darjeeling

Discover the secrets of Darjeeling's famous tea at the Glenburn Tea Estate. Join your guide on foot or by vehicle to explore this working tea estate. Meet the employees, learn how to care for the tea bushes and the art of plucking the "two leaves and a bud". Visit the Tea Factory to see the journey of the leaf from farm to teacup. Then, appreciate the delicate flavours in a tea tasting. This afternoon, choose from an abundance of activities offered by the estate, or simply relax on your veranda drinking in the spectacular views.

Glenburn Tea Estate | Meals: BLD

Day 10: Darjeeling

Leave the snow-tipped peaks and terraced tea plantations of Darjeeling behind and transfer privately to Bagdogra Airport for your onward journey.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Glenburn Tea Estate, Darjeeling



Started by a Scottish tea company in 1860, Glenburn has now passed into the hands of one of India's pioneering tea planting families, the Prakashes, who have over the years come to be known as the Chaiwala family which literally means tea planters. Today, the third and fourth generation carry almost a century of tea knowledge in their inheritance and invite you to visit Glenburn. This heavenly little plantation retreat lies above the banks of the River Rungeet, deep in the Himalaya and is overlooked by mighty Mount Kanchenjunga. Home to generations of tea planters, it remains today a working tea estate.

The bungalow has been lovingly restored with much devotion, care and commitment, whilst retaining the style of a colonial planter's bungalow. The four bedrooms in the original bungalow have been charmingly decorated with different themes and are spacious, warm and cosy. Those on the ground floor have a private sit out opening onto a verandah or garden. The four bedrooms in the new Water Lily Bungalow have views from heaven and are stunning – fresh, light, large and beautifully furnished with local floral themes. They are traditional yet have contemporary twists and are deliciously comfortable and private.

The main bungalow has a wonderful, long verandah with comfortable chairs running across the front of it. Inside is a very cosy, 'English-style' sitting

room and dining room delicious, fresh food is dished up - a perfect balance of Indian, Oriental and Western. There is also a small pavilion in the garden which is a lovely place for lunch, tea or dinner.

The full time, resident naturalist guide is on hand for all outdoor activities. The birdlife is impressive as well as the butterflies, and other fauna and flora. A number of hikes are on offer, ranging from gentle to difficult, and from a short afternoon ramble through a local village to a longer, full day trek along the rocky river bed of the River Rung Dung.

Why we like it

- A 150-year-old plantation house, situated on a small hilltop
- Working tea estate with magnificent views
- Surrounded by 1000 acres of private forest
- Abundance of activities ranging from walks to guided tours of the tea estate and factory

Abercrombie & Kent

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