



Panda Kingdom

*The Panda kingdom is a premier eco tour designed to facilitate and support the protection of the rare and elusive Red Panda. We fly in to the Eastern Indian Metropolis of **Calcutta** and enjoy the various historical sites that “**the city of joy**” has to offer. The city is alive and colourful, and also a heady mélange of various shades. And a tour of this pulsating city of literary figures, political thinkers, scientists, social reformers and artists who have shaped up modern India is a rewarding experience. We then travel to Darjeeling, often referred to as “**the queen of hills**”, and visit the major sites there. Perched on a hill Darjeeling offers spellbinding views of the Kanchenjunga Massif. We explore heritage landmarks that stand today as remnants of the British Raj. We enjoy the glorious sunrise from Tiger Hill unmatched in this part of the world and visit the popular sites of the town. The next six days we trek to the heart of the Singalila range and relish astounding views of the Himalayas. The Singalila National Park is a treasure trove of rare flora and fauna. If we are lucky we might bump into numerous secrets that it holds and is ready to reveal. We begin from Manebhanjyang on the foot of the Singalila National Park and trek through some of the Eastern Himalayas most pristine **Red Panda** habitat in search of one of Asia’s most elusive mammals. We will visit one of the highest organic tea estates in the world at Meghma that produces the veritable oolong tea. At Gairibas we meet people from the **Panda Initiative** who will familiarize us with their work. With their help we also look for rare animals like the clouded leopard, musk deer, snow leopard, himalayan black bear and a host of threatened bird species like the Spiny Babbler Scarlet Minivet, Kalij Pheasant, Blood Pheasant, Satyr Tragopan, Brown and Fulvous Parrotbills, Rufous-vented Tit, and Old World babblers like the Fire-tailed Myzornis and the Golden-breasted Fulvetta. We spend the next three days looking for the Red Panda and also understanding the habitat and the habits of this extraordinary creature. The next couple of days we trek through some of the most pristine and striking environments. We literally trek above the clouds with the Himalayan giants like the Kanchenjunga, Everest, Lhotse and Makalu to keep us company. During spring the forests come alive with vibrant magnolias, primulas, wild daisies and rhododendron.*

Day 1 Late night arrival in Calcutta.

Upon arrival at Dum Dum International Airport our representative will receive us and transfer us to our hotel and help us check in.

Overnight Fairlawn Hotel

Meals: None

Day 2 Full day guided sightseeing in Calcutta: Visit Dalhousie Square/ St. Paul’s Cathedral/ Nirmal Hriday/ Indian Museum/ Victoria Memorial

Since the English landed in Calcutta, this small fishing village went on to become one of the most vibrant cities in India. Today we take a walk down memory

lane and take a guide tour through the various sites that define the city. After breakfast we visit **The Dalhousie Square**, the nerve centre of English colonial power and trade during the two centuries that it was the capital of India under British rule. Originally named in honor of James, Marquise of Dalhousie, Governor General of India from 1847 to 1856 the two-square-kilometer area operated as the political, financial, social centre of the Indian Empire until the removal of the capital to New Delhi in 1911. British architects filled this epicenter of their power with neoclassical buildings, riverside promenades, and manicured parks, as well as office buildings and apartment houses, all built in Victorian style. Today, Dalhousie Square has

Calcutta: The documented history of Calcutta begins with the arrival of the British East India Company in 1690, when the Company was consolidating its trade business in Bengal. Job Charnock is credited to have laid the foundation to the city. It has grown from humble beginnings to be one of the most vibrant and important cities of India. From Fort William built to station its troops and as a regional base Calcutta went on to be the headquarters of the Bengal Presidency. The city for a short while fell into the hands of the Nawab of Bengal and was retaken by Robert Clive in the battle of Plassey that really laid the foundations for the British Empire in India. It was later named the capital of British India in 1772. Lord Richard Wellesley, the Governor General between 1797 - 1805 was largely responsible for the growth of the city and its public architecture which led to the description of Calcutta as "The City of Palaces".



The city underwent rapid industrial growth from the 1850s, especially in the textile and jute sectors; this caused a massive investment in infrastructure projects like rail roads and telegraph by British government. A socio-cultural reform followed often referred to as the Bengal Renaissance. Within a couple of year Calcutta, a sleep hamlet along the Gangetic plains was transformed into a bustling metropolis, as much a Victorian city as any. During the Second World War the location of Calcutta prompted the British to move the capital to New Delhi in 1911. Today it is a vibrant modern city yet it clings to its past with edifices that date back centuries and give us a glimpse yesteryears.

retained many of its original colonial buildings and is one of a few remaining city centers of its kind in this part of the world. It has now been declared as one of the 100 endangered cultural heritage sites by the World Monuments Fund. We then continue to St. Paul's Cathedral. This huge edifice stands close to the main nerve centres of Calcutta within walking distance from Victoria Memorial and a host of other attractions of the city. Built in 1847 it's with its spire in the likeness of Norwich Cathedral its gothic style with stained glass windows and frescoes make it a sight to see. St. Paul's was sanctified in 1874. We visit **Nirmal Hriday or the Home of the Pure Heart** started by Mother Teresa in 1952. It was the first Home for the Dying in the city of Calcutta. With the help of the local administrators she started her home in an abandoned Hindu temple in Kalighat. Today we can see hundreds of old and destitute people being tended to by the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, an order she founded. We then visit the **Indian museum**. It is one of the oldest museums in the world. The museum was founded by Dr Nathaniel Wallich a Danish botanist at Serampore in 1814. Today it is located in the heart of Calcutta and is the oldest institution of its kind in Asia Pacific region with the largest repository of artifacts in the orient belonging to different eras. The present building was opened in 1875 and has different sections dedicated to geology, zoology, industry, archaeology, art, and ethnology. It exhibits among others: an Egyptian mummy, the Buddhist stupa from Bharhut, the Buddha's ashes, the Ashoka pillar, the official emblem of India, fossil skeletons of prehistoric animals and a rare collection of arts objects and antiques. We wrap up our visit of Calcutta with a visit to the **Victoria Memorial**. Originally built as a memorial of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom who also

considered the Empress of India, it today serves as a museum and a tourist attraction. Sir William Emerson designed the building in a classical fusion of European and Mughal elements. During the evenings light shows can be seen which add another dimension to this beautiful architectural masterpiece.

Overnight Fairlawn Hotel
Meals: B

Day 3 Fly Calcutta to Bagdogra, transfer to Darjeeling

After breakfast we will be transferred to the airport for your flight to **Bagdogra**. Upon arrival in Bagdogra meet our awaiting guide and transfer to Darjeeling. The drive from Bagdogra to Darjeeling is very interesting. The road snakes through dense jungles, a thick foliage of Sal, Toon and teak trees dotted with purple bougainvillea, scarlet poinsettia and exotic mauve of the orchids, and tea plantations that cling to steep hillsides and small clusters of villages and small towns that dot hills. The lush green undulating tea gardens and the marvelous mountain views make the drive an experience in itself. We stop en route to see the loops and 'z' crossings on the railway tracks that stand as testimony to the sheer engineering prowess of the pioneers who helped bring this area a little closer to other people about 150 years ago. Upon arrival in Darjeeling we check into our hotel. Rest of the evening we are free to explore the town on our own. In the evening the guide will meet and orient you regarding the next day's program.

Overnight Hotel New Elgin (Deluxe) or Hotel Dekeling (Standard) or Travellers Inn (Budget)
Meals: B/L/D

Day 4 Early morning Tiger Hill for Sunrise, visit Ghoom Monastery and take train back to Darjeeling, Afternoon visit HMI, Zoological Park, Tibetan Refugee Center

We rise early in the morning and head Tiger hill and see the visit the major sites the town has to offer. Perched on a ridge above Ghoom - Jorebunglow, 11 kms from Darjeeling town at an elevation of 2590 m, **Tiger Hill** offers mesmerizing sunrise as well as an astounding view of the imposing Kanchenjunga massif as well as a host of Himalayan giants like the Chomolhari, Makalu and Mount Everest. Tiger Hill is very popular with tourists and we can see hordes of people making their way to this vantage point to enjoy the sights that it has on offer. We have breakfast on the hilltop and then drive back to Ghoom and visit the Monastery there. Constructed in 1875 by Lama Sherab Gyatso, the **Ghoom Monastery** is one of the largest monasteries in Darjeeling. Also known as the Ghoom Monastery it houses a 15 ft statue of the Maitreya Buddha and contains images of Chenrezi and Tsongkapa. The monastery belongs to the Gelugpa order. We take a ride by the fabled Toy train back to Darjeeling. After lunch at the hotel we head to **Himalayan Mountaineering Institute**. The Institute is one of the premier mountaineering training facilities in India supported by Indian Government to promote mountain climbing and adventure activities related to this sport. Since its inception decades ago hundreds of students have graduated from this institute and gone on to create history for themselves and achieve personal milestones. Darjeeling until the early 1950s was the hub of mountaineering activity in India. Nepal had not yet opened its doors to the west for tourism and most the expeditions in Nepal began in Darjeeling but no climbing institute existed then. However the ascent of Everest by Late Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary on 29th May 1953 gave an impetus to mountaineering in the country. On the 4th of November 1954 Darjeeling saw the opening of the Himalayan Institute by personal initiative of Late Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru the first Prime Minister of India and Dr.B.C.Roy the then Chief Minister of West Bengal to promote mountaineering activities in the country. The museum housed in its premises showcases the equipments and personal gear used by Tenzing Norgay during his ascent of Mt. Everest. From the institute we walk through a forested enclave to the **Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park**. Established in 1958 under the Department of Education of the State for study and conservation of the Himalayan Fauna, it is the only Zoo in the world to breed Tibetan Wolf in captivity and the first South Asian Zoo to breed Snow Leopard, the Siberian Tiger and Red Panda. We visit the **Tibetan Refugee Center** and head back to the hotel to wind the day.

Overnight Hotel New Elgin (Deluxe) or Hotel Dekeling (Standard) or Travellers Inn (Budget)
Meals: B/L/D

Day 5 Transfer to Manebhanjyang, trek to Tumling (5 hours, 3070 m)

Darjeeling: " The one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once- by even a glimpse- would not give that glimpse for the shows of the rest of the world combined", is how Mark Twain described Darjeeling. Quite true as a visit to Darjeeling will surely remain etched in our memories forever. Often referred to as the "queen of the hills", this small picturesque town still retains its colonial flavour and old world charm. It is steeped in history and the glorious past this small hill station enjoyed is visible in every nook and corner of the small town. The Mall, the gardens and a host landmarks like the St. Andrews Church, the Gymkhana, the Townhalls and a host of schools housed in buildings that date back to the late 1800s make a visit to Darjeeling a travel back into time. A walk in the mall and a ride on the celebrated 'toy train' against the backdrop of one of the most stupendous views of Kanchenjunga is indeed a journey back into a bygone era. Spread over in a natural amphitheatre with Kanchenjunga as its backdrop Darjeeling offers beautiful imagery often described in superlatives. Today it is the land of the beautiful rhododendrons, the sparkling white magnolias, never ending rolling hills covered with a sea of tea bushes, the evergreen forests of silver fir-all under the blanket of a brilliant azure sky dappled with specks of clouds. Darjeeling with its soothing climate and its beautiful landscape draws thousands of tourists from all around the globe. The laidback atmosphere, the ever smiling people, the unique culture and the magnificent scenery and provides a respite to all weary minds. It is a great escape and a perfect place to unwind and enjoy the bounties of nature.



Today we get up early in the morning and after breakfast prepare for our day ahead. We drive 26 kilometers which takes about 45 minutes to the small 'bazaar' of Manebhanjyang, the gateway to Singalila National Park. Here we meet our advance team of porters and other support staff and commence our trek into the realm of the Red Panda. The trek from Manebhanjyang to Chitre is perhaps the most difficult part of the whole trek as we slowly negotiate the steep climb. Chitre is a small hamlet spread over a ridge and has a small monastery that serves as a retreat for monks who want to meditate. From here we pass through green meadows, forest with most laden trees and reach the small settlement of Meghma which the highest organic tea plantation in the world. From here Tumling is quite close. We check into a home and have the rest of the evening to enjoy the amazing vistas to ourselves. We enjoy true Himalayan hospitality.

Overnight Homestay
Meals: BLD

Day 6 Trek to Gairibas (4 hours. 2621 m)



Today is a very easy day as it is mostly downhill. We walk leisurely and pass through forests that abound with rhododendron and magnolia. The clean air laden with fresh smell of the moss laden trees is simply invigorating as we negotiate the undulating ridges to reach our next stop Gairibas located further 9 kilometers away.

Overnight Homestay

Meals: BLD

Day 7/8/9 The search for the Red Panda

We have three interesting days ahead of us. People from "The Panda Initiative", who are people who have grown up in these parts in places like Manebhanjyang and Tumling will be on hand to share their "hands on" knowledge regarding this animal. "The Panda Initiative" is a local effort by the people to save these rare animals by educating the local people and the conservation of the habitat. Our animal trackers who are familiar with the surrounding forests will be on hand to help us look for these elusive creatures. A visit into the forest is a foray into the unknown. The forest is quite dense and most of the places do not have any trails so we have to be prepared mentally to really have the "wild" experience in the real sense. If we are lucky we might get a glimpse of some rare animals like the Himalayan Black Bear, the Clouded Leopard, the Snow Leopard, the Red Panda and a host of other animals and exotic birds like the rare Spiny Babbler a bird that is nearly extinct.

Overnight Homestay

Meals: BLD

Day 10 Trek to Sandakphu (6 hours, 3636 m)

Today is quite a tiring day. After an early breakfast we begin our ascent. From Gairibas the forests give way to green meadows and small shrubs and bushes as we gain altitude. The rhododendron trees also grow smaller as we go higher up. Our next stop is Kalapokhri which is a continuous climb through rhododendron forests. The small village derives its name from a small black pond that is considered holy by the locals. It is believed that even the water of the pond never freezes. We continue our climb and as we go higher up we truly

begin to understand the meaning of the phrase 'above the clouds'. We can see the cloud cover the low lying areas like a thick white blanket. On a clear day we can enjoy the constant view of the Kanchenjunga Massif as we make the steep. Situated on the fringe of Singilala ridge right on the border between India and Nepal Sandakphu offers amazing views of Mt. Everest and the Kanchenjunga range. Sandakphu today is a cluster of houses that serve as guesthouses and lodges to tourists visiting this region.

Overnight Lodge

Meals: BLD

Day 11 Trek to Moley via Phalut (7 hours, 3536 m)

The trek to Moley is comparatively easy going as it is a straight trek without many climbs and descents. The trail follows the Singalila ridge covered with green meadows and scattered vegetation of magnolia, silver fir, chestnut oak and rhododendron. During spring the ridge is a riot of

multihued magnolias, primulas, wild daisies and rhododendron. The splash of colours against the looming background of the mountains is a sight to remember. We trek literally on ridge that serves as the international border between Nepal and India. Towards the left we can see rolling hill and river valleys on the Nepalese side; straight ahead the Kanchenjunga massif and the Everest are constant companions. On the right we see the hills of Sikkim. Phalut sits on the edge of Sikkim, Nepal and West Bengal. Kanchenjunga seems within touching distance from here. Picnic lunch en route against the backdrop of the Himalayas. The last stretch up to Sabargram is a little climb. The trail forks here and we take the path on the right going downhill to Molley.

Overnight Lodge

Meals: BLD

Day 12 Trek to Ramam (5 hours, 2560 m)

We make quite dramatic descent and pass the small settlements of Rais, Tamangs and Sherpas at Gorkhey and Samaden on the Sikkimese border. We then make our way through sub-tropical forest that abounds with diverse trees and plants. During spring the woods explode with bright colourful flowers.

Overnight Homestay

Meals: BLD

Day 13 Trek to Rimbick (5 hours, 2286 m)

Today we walk downhill past forests to the small town of Rimbick spread over a hill. We make our way passing through a rich landscape of forested hills and meadows. The forest boasts of a diverse variety of sub-tropical trees, pines, spruce and rhododendrons. Rimbick is an unassuming town right at the border with Sikkim. Down below you can see the Ramam river and across is the state of Sikkim.

Overnight Homestay

Meals: BLD

Day 14 Drive to Darjeeling

The drive from Rimbick to Darjeeling is also quite interesting across forested areas and small

settlements. We take our time and enjoy the beautiful landscape. Upon arrival in Darjeeling we check into our hotel and prepare for our return journey.

Overnight Hotel New Elgin (Deluxe) or Hotel Dekeling (Standard) or Travellers Inn (Budget)
Meals: B/L/D

Day 15 Drive to Bagdogra, fly to Delhi, international departure in the evening

After breakfast we drive for two hours across beautiful hilly terrain and reach the Gangetic plains. We take our flight from Bagdogra to Delhi. In Delhi you will be met by our representative upon arrival. We can either head directly to the airport or check into a hotel (where wash and change rooms will be arranged, please note that prior information will be needed) and await your flight for the evening.

Meals: B

Necessary information

Trekking

Though many credit Colonel Jimmy Roberts of pioneering trekking in the Himalayas it is said that a priest is supposed to have encouraged it in Darjeeling. Jesuit Rev. Fr Macdonald is attributed to have initiated trekking in the Darjeeling Hills almost 80 years ago when he trekked the along beautiful ridges to enjoy the bounties of nature. The trek we offer enables us to discover the passion of the Himalayan region some of which is unmarred by humans. They are a journey to self discovery - a passage to the personal Shangri-la. The stunning views, the exotic flora and fauna and the culture make trekking a rewarding holiday. This trek does not require any previous experience. Anyone with sound health and mind, and love for nature can go on this trek. Though treks require negotiating steep climbs and descents you can set up your own pace and

need not wear yourself out. This program has been tailor made taking into consideration all these aspects.

Easy

This is a soft trek that introduces you to what trekking is all about. This trek is designed for beginners and is for people who have never trekked before. We explore villages not very far away from road head. It involves average walking of 5-6 days at a steady pace. Normally you visit low lying area and do not go beyond 4000 m. The terrain is usually straight forward and does not require negotiating steep climbs and descents. Anyone who is healthy and enjoys the outdoors can easily take part in this trek.

Responsible Tourism

We offer different treks and tours which provide an insight at the treasures that the region has to offer. The **Panda Kingdom** is a wildlife program customized to raise awareness on environment conservation and deeply understand the social and ecological value of our natural surroundings and how it affects our lives. The tour, a part of our Panda Initiative, provides you to be directly involved (though small) in the conservation of wildlife by interacting with the local people and encouraging them to preserve their surroundings. This program provides you the option to positively make an impact on the lives of other people giving the trip a whole new meaning. You can spend some days in a place and be among the "real" local people and enjoy a genuine cross cultural experience rather than "on the surface experience". It is also a part of our homestay program that provides you the chance to stay with local households. This relatively new way of traveling encourages and supports conservation as well as provides employment and a source of income to the household ensuring that the money is not just concentrated with the people who operate the trip. This program is also open to volunteers and students who are interested to come and work with the local people regarding the red panda. It will give you an opportunity to change the

way you view yourselves and also leave a lasting memory on the beneficiaries. No classroom can match the knowledge gained through firsthand experience. It is a rich opportunity for learning to grow personally and develop leadership qualities that are essential to cope with this ever demanding environment that we are exposed to everyday.

Protecting the environment

The ecology of the Himalayas is very fragile. Responsible and sustainable tourism has always been our main thrust and mantra so that the environment and its resources- natural or cultural - always remain intact for the future generations to savor. We strongly advise that all non-biodegradable items such as can, bottles, batteries, plastics etc to be brought back to **Darjeeling**



for proper disposition. We discourage the use of bottled mineral water to control the plastic waste. Since water is essential while traveling at such high altitudes we advise our clients to carry sturdy water bottles so that they can fill them up with hot water that is treated with water purifiers. As a part of our responsible tourism drive we use local guides and locally owned hotels (wherever possible)/ lodges or homes so that the people can earn income from direct employment or through the distribution of work responsibility. We have set some environmental codes that it adheres to strictly to ensure the preservation of our fragile ecology. We burn or bury all biodegradable rubbish properly and clients are discouraged to buy mineral water to control the plastic bottle waste. Instead we provide boiled and filtered water to our clients throughout the trek. We discourage the clients to buy any animal products. We make an effort to use hotels/ lodges that pursue good environmental practices. We strive to provide our clients with key information like dress codes, local language and customs regarding the destinations. Orientation programs to educate our trekking support crew on environmental conservation and its importance are undertaken periodically. This trip has been designed in a way that it can be done by any age group without any prior experience in adventure.

Group size

The size of the group could vary from 2 - 16 people. Though we can manage larger groups due to group dynamics we only operate groups up to 16 people. We have limited number of people in all our departures to ensure personalized service. We try and make sure that the need of each and every client is attended to and he/she feels comfortable and can enjoy the amazing culture, landscape and people better and have a great holiday.

Access

Darjeeling is connected to the rest of the country by air, train and road.

BY AIR - Major airlines operate direct flights from Calcutta and Delhi to Bagdogra airport which is 2 hours drive from Darjeeling.

BY TRAIN - New Jalpaiguri, 2 hours from Darjeeling, is connected to the major cities of India. Several trains operate between the major cities of India and New Jalpaiguri.

BY ROAD - Siliguri, the major hub in the plains is well connected to the rest of India by road. It is a 2 hour scenic drive through tea gardens and forests to Darjeeling.

Documentation:

An Indian Visa is required to visit Darjeeling. It can be obtained in the Indian Embassy or in the consulates. For this trek we need a permit for Singalila National Park. We will

acquire this upon arrival in Manebhanjyang.

Currency

The currency in **India** is the Indian Rupee (Rs), which is divided into 100 paise (p). Bills are available in 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 denominations. Travellers' Cheques can be changed at banks in the cities but not necessarily elsewhere, although some hotels and travel agents are licensed to change money. US dollars in cash are not widely accepted so it is prudent to change your money into rupees before embarking on a trip. Your guide will be able to advise on where to change money. You will need your passport when you change money. Credit cards are accepted in hotels and shops catering to tourists. Credit cards are also useful as an emergency source of cash as there are a lot of automated teller machines in the major cities and towns and the major cities from where money can be withdrawn. You may well be approached by people offering black market currency exchange - this is of course illegal, and hard currency gained in this way often contributes to criminal activities.

Medical Kit

We provide a first aid kit with medication for altitude sickness, nausea, dehydration, pain killers, and medication for dysentery, diarrhea, bandages, water purifier, antiseptic creams, throat lozenges, eye drops, antibiotics, nasal sprays, and pain relievers in tubes or spray but it is advisable to carry some medication on you without taking too much room in your baggage.

However we recommend the clients to carry the following items:

Aspirin or Panadol - for pain or fever

Antihistamine - useful as a decongestant for colds, allergies, to ease the itch from insect bites and stings or to help prevent motion sickness

Antibiotics-useful if you are traveling well off the beaten track but they must be prescribed

Kaolin preparation (Pepto-Bismol), Imodium or Lomotil - for stomach upsets and to stop diarrhea and dehydration

Rehydration mixture - for treatment of severe diarrhea and dehydration

Antiseptic, Mercurochrome and Antibiotic powder or similar 'dry' spray-for cuts and grazes



Calamine lotion-to ease irritation from bites and stings
Bandages and band-aids- for minor injuries and wounds
Scissors, Tweezers and a Thermometer
Throat Lozenges
Acetaminophen (paracetamol)
Antacid tablets

Health

Prevention is always the best cure. So taking care in what you eat or drink is the best bet. Travelling in India does not involve major health risks providing simple precautions are observed. Drink only bottled water or boiled, filtered and treated water. Reputable brands of bottled water or soft drinks are generally fine. Take care with fruit juice, particularly if water may have been added. Do not take ice; be wary of uncooked food including salads, fruit juice and ice-cream; remember that milk is usually unpasteurised; do not bathe in freshwater rivers and lakes, and maintain a high standard of personal hygiene - wash your hands frequently and clean your teeth with bottled water. Please remember to pay attention to sensible hygiene at all times and to follow any advice given by your guide - it is essential in avoiding illness. Despite these precautions, the change of climate, water and diet may still cause some minor stomach upset, and you should obtain a suitable drug such as Immodium or Lomotil from your pharmacist to take with you. If you can, obtain suppositories, as they are obviously easier to use if you are feeling or being sick. Remember however that these drugs provide relief from the symptoms but don't cure the problem and should not be used if you are dehydrated - the main treatment is to drink plenty of fluids: weak black tea with a little sugar and diluted fizzy drinks left to go flat are recommended. You should also take a rehydration solution such as Dioralyte in case of severe problems, and don't eat rich or spicy food as you recover. Previous guests have recommended taking a hot water bottle (an aluminium water bottle can serve a dual purpose such as this), which can be a great comfort to an upset stomach. Thoroughly cooked food is the safest bet but not if it has been left to cool. Stomach upsets are the most likely travel health problem but the majority of these upsets are relatively minor. Wash your hands frequently as it's quite easy to contaminate your own food. You should clean your teeth with purified water rather than straight from the tap. Avoid climatic extremes. Keep out of the sun when it is hot, dress warmly when it is cold. Avoid potential diseases by dressing sensibly. You can get worm infections through bare feet. Try to avoid insect bites by covering bare skin when insects are around, by screening windows or by using insect repellents.

Altitude Sickness

Sometimes travelers face health hazards mainly due to the high altitude. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is a frequent problem in the Himalayan region and can



affect a traveler in various ways irrespective of their age, gender or health fitness. Even if you are in perfect health and peak fitness, you can still develop AMS. Previous experience of high places, pre-ascent training and good physical shape do not prevent the onset of altitude sickness - it can strike anyone of any age. Our body normally takes time to be acclimated to the high altitude. The body undergoes a number of physiological changes some of which are increased pulse and respiratory rate. Others appear slowly over a period of weeks like the change in acid base balance and production of extra red blood cells. These changes and the effect of intense sunlight, strenuous walks and dehydration may cause some mild or vague symptoms such as loss of appetite, fatigue, headache, nausea, dizziness, palpitations, sleeplessness, breathlessness. The condition is caused by lower than normal levels of oxygen being absorbed. If the sickness is acute, you can become confused, irrational and mentally unbalanced. The best way to counter it is prevention. You should not exert yourself or walk too fast. Drinking plenty of liquid, eating well and watching for warning signs is highly advised. Aside from following your guide's advice, you can try to eat a diet that is high in carbohydrates to build up glycogen in the muscles, avoid unnecessary vigorous activity in addition to the trek or climb and do not ascend faster than you need. Keep physical activity to the minimum and take regular doses of diamox as directed by your physician. If the symptoms do not recede then do not hesitate to talk with our staff. Our trekking teams carry a Gamow bag (a portable compression chamber) to be used in severe cases. If you have a history of respiratory and heart problems please consult your physician before embarking on this trip. But based on our years of experience, with proper preparation and time taken to acclimatize, severe cases are relatively rare. Though we will ensure that you are safe and at worst will suffer only the mildest of symptoms it is best to listen to your body; no-one knows it better than you!

Safety

We have been successfully organizing treks since the inception of the company. Safety is number one priority for us. This itinerary has been meticulously



planned and designed with years of experience and know-how. Thorough planning, good logistical coordination and support of experienced staff ensure that our clients enjoy the trip to the utmost. Our support staff is also well equipped with communication devices so that they can get help should a situation an emergency situation arise.

Immunisations

Immunisations currently recommended for India are those for Hepatitis A and Typhoid. Typhoid may be given in two separate injections so you will need to consult your doctor in plenty of time. A vaccination is available for cholera but most doctors no longer consider this worth giving as it has a low success rate and tourists are unlikely to become infected if basic hygiene is observed. Ensure also that you apply insect repellent liberally and do not expose bare skin to mosquitoes after dusk. Meningitis is a risk in certain areas of Nepal at certain times of year and you should consult your doctor as to whether immunisation is necessary. You should also ensure that your Tetanus and Polio injections are up-to-date. The situation with regard to vaccinations and health precautions is subject to change, and you should consult your doctor for advice as early as possible.

Physical Fitness

Since the above trip entails traveling at high altitude it is necessary that the client is in good health. Before you embark on any one of these trips it is advisable to be physically and mentally fit and prepared. Prepare your self by jogging or walking at least one hour daily for a minimum period of one month. A thorough health check up is strongly recommended before the trip.

Medical Facilities:

There are many pharmacies which sell medicines and some have a doctor's clinic. Prescription is not a requirement for purchase of harmless drugs in India.

Insurance

All the clients are strongly advised to have personal travel insurance covering trip cancellations or

interruptions due to natural disasters or medical reasons, insurance against emergency evacuation, medical and accident insurance.

Time Zones

India is 5 hours 30 minutes ahead of GMT.

Drinking Water

While on trek we serve boiled and filtered clean bacteria free water everyday.

Food on the trek

Food on this trek is based on the best available food in the lodges. Our support crew will also carry some extra food with them to serve you on the trip.

Support Crew

The support crew comprises of a qualified tour leader, sirdar, sherpas and porters. All our staff are locals who are experts in their field. They are well trained and experienced to handle clients' individual needs. Their knowledge on local culture and customs makes your trip an extra exciting. All our Tour Leaders have undergone leadership training and have had intensive courses on mountain medicine, first aid and are capable of handling emergency situations. They are deep understanding and knowledge of the mountain culture and are familiar with high altitude survival skills. Our support crew (except the porters) are usually sherpas who have been the backbone of the tourism industry in these parts and the team usually has years of experience between them and so our team is prepared for all eventualities in the mountains. The preservation of the fragile Eco system is of utmost importance to us and our support staff is made well aware of the significance of preserving the environment. We conduct regular orientation programs to educate our support crew regarding the importance of conservation of our environment. We take pride in the high quality of service we render - personalized, professional and above all enjoyable. Our crew with a keen sense of hospitality will make your holiday worthwhile. You will make friends with our tour leader

during the trip and find adventure that you will re-live the rest of your life.

Best Season

It is best to visit this region in **spring** and **autumn**.

Spring generally begins in **March** and ends in **May**.

Though there is a slight haze the forests covered with a riot of scarlet coloured rhododendrons, primulas, daisies, white magnolias and a host of other beautiful plants making a trek an exhilarating experience.

Mid September heralds the beginning of the **autumn** season. Mid **September** to mid **November** enjoys excellent climate coupled with deep blue sky and clear days making this period the best trekking period of the year.

Accommodation

We use different categories of accommodation (budget, standard and deluxe) in the towns depending upon the requirement of the clients. Meals plans are on BB, MAP and AP basis depending upon the requirement of the clients. Please see the list of hotels that we use.

During the trek the accommodation is totally based on homes of the local people so that we can experience the local culture and savour local cuisines and lodges. The homes are clean and often also double as a restaurant and lodges for the tourists during the tourist season. We will provide the best possible accommodation en route. However please note that the accommodation in this area are not as good as one would expect in Nepal as tourism has not yet developed into a full fledged economic activity in this region.

Transportation

Driving is on the left in India but your vehicle may be a left-hand drive, meaning you alight into the traffic -

please take care. Comfortable jeeps, vans or tourist coaches will be provided for all transportation depending on the size of the group. For groups up to 8 people we use Tata Sumo and Mahindra Maxx Jeeps for Budget groups and Scorpio, Tavera, Toyota Qualis, Ford Endeavour and Toyota Innova for Deluxe groups. For bigger groups we use, Tata Tempo, regular and deluxe coaches depending upon the category of the group.

Risk and Liability

Our trips mean safety, reliability and the professional personnel to ensure your convenience at all times. However sometimes unforeseen circumstances like landslides, floods, bad weather, bad road condition, vehicle breakdown, delay in flights due to bad weather, local political situation could contribute to the change in the program. No claim of refund will be entertained including early return from the trip, or change in itinerary due to unavoidable situations like the above. All extra expenses (apart from the services offered as per the program) that occur in such cases would have to be borne directly by the clients themselves.



What to Take

Clothing and Footwear

Warm down jacket for the cold

Warm clothes

Spare clothing - several thinner layers are better than one thick layer

The weather in Darjeeling can vary significantly, and the best advice is to take clothing that will layer to cover all eventualities. It may easily be cold in the evenings and when walking at higher altitudes.

Walking boots - well worn-in, with good ankle support and strong ridged soles with good tread
Trekking boots

Windproof/waterproof trousers and jacket with hood, good rain gear

Sun protection: sunglasses with UV protection

Loop-pile socks - one thick and one thin pair reduces the risk of blisters

Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts

Sun hat

Comfortable clothes - for evenings and comfortable shoes for sightseeing

A small rucksack - a bin liner will keep contents dry

Balaclava/ warm Cap

Scarf/ mask

Windbreakers/ Jacket

Down Sleeping bag

Flashlight

Sturdy water bottle

Moisturizing lotion

Full length Thermarest pad

Large duffel bag

Lip balm

Sunscreen

Hydration bladder with drinking tube

Pocket knife. Small Swiss-army type

Water purification tablets

Toiletry kit

Nylon stuff sacks. For food and gear storage large

Ziplocs are useful also

Towel

Hand wipes

Favorite snack food

Paperback books, cards, Walkman, etc.

Camera

Fanny pack or wallet for travel documents, money & passport