

Sikkim Kangchenjunga

23 Days
6 Days EASY Trekking &
7 Days MODERATE Trekking
Maximum Altitude 4900 Metres

- ◆ A MAGNIFICENT JOURNEY COMBINING TWO EXCELLENT TREKS: THE SINGALILA RIDGE & THE GOECHA LA
- ◆ SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF THE HIMALAYA, KANGCHENJUNGA, MAKALU & EVEREST
- ◆ VISIT ANCIENT BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
- ◆ ENJOY THE CHARMS OF CHARACTER 'OLD WORLD' HOTELS IN DARJEELING & KALIMPONG

For dates & prices please check our website: www.classicjourneys.co.uk

Introduction

This is a superb journey to the eastern corner of India, trekking along Kangchenjunga's spur, the Singalila Ridge in West Bengal and on into the mountainous Kingdom of Sikkim. The mountainous area of West Bengal is nestled in between Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Much of the region was once part of an independent nation called Sikkim. Here Kangchenjunga the world's third highest mountain straddles the India-Nepal border, our route along the Singalila Ridge allows us spectacular access to a panorama of mighty Kangchenjunga and many other high Himalayan peaks.

The state of Bengal was split after Partition into East and West Bengal. East Bengal is now Bangladesh. West Bengal remains a part of India. The local language and culture in this area is Bengali and it is considered an important cultural centre for Bengali artists, writers and spiritualists. The state is egg timer shaped, squeezed at its middle between Nepal and Bangladesh, spreading outwards in the north to encompass the West Bengal Hills and outwards in the south to form a delta at the Bay of Bengal. In the south there is the state capital Calcutta and Sunderbans, a delta area where the elusive royal Bengal tiger roams estuarine forests in the Sunderbans Wildlife Sanctuary. In the north are the peaks of the high Himalaya, the quaint "British town" of Darjeeling, and our access point Bagdogra airport 12km outside the chaotic trade centre of Siliguri.

Our journey starts with a flight to Bagdogra in far eastern India followed by a 3-hour drive to the famous British Raj hill station, Darjeeling. Darjeeling (2134m) straddles a ridge surrounded by tea plantations and holds a commanding position for trade routes to Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan. Many Nepalese live in Darjeeling and work on the tea plantations, or as mountain guides and traders. Nepali is the first language of many in Darjeeling. The area has fine views of the mountains, including Kangchenjunga (the world's third highest mountain), which are best seen between mid September through to mid December and mid March through to mid June although haze starts to build in late spring. Monsoon starts in late June. The temperatures are cool and the British used Darjeeling to escape the heat and humidity of India's summers. At dawn, Tiger Hill (2590m) offers the very best place to view Kangchenjunga and the Eastern Himalaya including Lhotse (8501m), Everest (8848m) and Makalu (8475m). Sightseeing in Darjeeling will include a visit to the fascinating Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.

Ancient Sikkim was once an independent nation ruled since the 15th century by a Chogyal (King) belonging to the Namgyal (Lepchas) clan. This region was once much larger than it is today but over the 18th century Sikkim lost much of its land to Nepal, Bhutan and the British. The British defeated the Nepali army in 1817 and gave southern Sikkim back to the Chogyal. However this was in exchange for the resort of Darjeeling (now situated in West Bengal). Sikkim continued to struggle to maintain its independence but after losing more and more of its powers (due to repeatedly relying on India to maintain its stability) the region finally became the 22nd state of India in 1975.

Our trek start point is a short drive from Darjeeling and will take us on to the delightful Singalila Ridge. The ridge is the main spur running south from the huge Kangchenjunga massif, separating West Bengal, Nepal and Sikkim. The ridge is the focus of our trek and provides tremendous views of many well-known peaks in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. The walking is easy, through oak, magnolia and rhododendron forests, which in the spring turn the entire slopes into a blanket of red and pink flowers. Looking into Nepal we have a superb panorama of five of the world's highest mountains, Everest (8848m), Lhotse (8516m), Makalu (8462m), Chamlang (7319m) and Kangchenjunga (8586m). In Sikkim are the peaks of Kokthang (6147m), Kabru (7338m), Kangchenjunga Pandim (6691m) and Narsing (5825m) and in Bhutan we can see Chomolhari (7314m). The highlight of our trek will be the changing colours on these great peaks at sunrise and sunset, which are particularly spectacular. As we leave the mountains behind our trail weaves through tiny settlements on either side of the India-Nepal border before descending through dense mixed forests of the Singalila National Park to the orderly villages inhabited by Nepalese settlers.

At Rhimbic transport will be waiting for the drive to the quiet village of Yuksom (1770m), the start of our Goecha La trek into the mountainous Kingdom of Sikkim. Sikkim is a land of high mountains, Buddhist monasteries, orchids, butterflies, dense forests and clear streams; perfect trekking country. Bird life is prolific and wild alpine flowers grow in profusion. This tiny state of India, situated in the eastern Himalaya has some of the finest mountain scenery in the world and is well known for providing stunning views of Kangchenjunga (8598m), the world's third highest mountain that straddles the border with Nepal. Agriculture is the main activity mainly planted on small terraced fields throughout southern Sikkim. Rice is grown in summer with maize, barley and wheat grown in winter. Potatoes, oranges and cardamom are other important cash earners. Sheep and yak are herded in high pastures up to 4200 metres. Dense mixed and coniferous forests cover the southern half of Sikkim thinning to alpine vegetation towards the higher northern areas. The people are predominantly Buddhist and there are many active monasteries where traditional and ancient rituals are practised in an atmosphere of peace and serenity.

Our highest camp is near the sacred Samiti Lake at 4250 metres, it is a beautiful location surrounded by towering snow-capped peaks. The climax of the trek will be the close views of the massive eastern wall of Kangchenjunga, rising a sheer 4200 metres above the Talung glacier from the Goecha La pass (4900m).

On our return, we trek back to Yuksom. Now time to relax after our trek as we drive through tea gardens to the quiet hill resort of Kalimpong. This is a wonderfully peaceful location before the flight back to Delhi, and we can take our time to visit the Buddhist monasteries, tea gardens and orchid nurseries. This is a superb tour, offering a varied itinerary with beautiful mountain views from the Singalila Ridge and the dramatic scenery of Sikkim, enchanting old world hotels, and the charms of the Eastern Himalaya.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart UK

Depart UK on a flight to Delhi.

Day 2 - Delhi

Arrive Delhi. Met and transferred to our hotel. Rest of the day to relax. Overnight hotel.

Day 3 – Darjeeling (2134 metres)

Morning drive to the domestic airport from where we fly to Bagdogra at the bottom of the Darjeeling hills. The flight provides stunning views of the Himalayan range and weather permitting; we see many of the Himalayan giants including Cho Oyu, Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and then the massive bulk of Kangchenjunga, before we descend into Bagdogra.

The 4 to 5 hour long drive is along a road that soon leaves the rice fields and coconut palms of the plains for the tea garden covered slopes of the lower hills running close beside the Siliguri-Darjeeling mountain railway. We stop for a break half way up at Kurseong before climbing up to Ghoom at 2438 metres and then descending 300 metres to Darjeeling. There are fine views of the Kangchenjunga range on a clear day. Evening free to explore. Overnight hotel. (BLD)

Day 4 - Darjeeling - Tiger Hill

We are woken early for a cup of tea before driving 11 km in jeeps to Tiger Hill to see the amazing colours of a sunrise over Kangchenjunga. On the way back, we visit Ghoom monastery before returning to our Hotel for breakfast. After breakfast we visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and the small zoo beside it with interesting Himalayan animal species including red panda and snow leopard. The rest of the day is free to relax and explore the interesting and colourful bazaars or to take a brief ride from Darjeeling to Ghoom and back (optional extra) on the steam engine drawn narrow gauge railway. Overnight Hotel. (BLD)

Day 5 - Tonglu (3070 metres)

Our trek starts with a drive (1 hour) by jeep to the border town of Maneybhanjang (2130m) that lies on the India-Nepal border. We meet our trekking crew and porters who would have reached here earlier in the day before starting up a steep, broken jeep track that zigzags up some 600 metres to a tea shack where we stop for lunch. The gradient eases somewhat as the track enters patches of oak and rhododendron forest leading to Maghma and a further kilometre up to Tonglu. From here there are particularly good views of Darjeeling town spread over the ridge immediately opposite and 1000 metres below us on one hand and wide views of the entire Kangchenjunga range on the other. (5 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 6 - Gairibans (3206 metres)

After a relaxed breakfast and time for photographs, we have a short, easy walk to Gairibans, which translates as the village amongst the bamboo thickets. The initial level walk takes us past a long Mani wall to the Nepalese border post in the large village of Jaubari - one of the few border crossings in this part of the world where we are actually waved on without any formalities. After a tea break, we take a downhill trail back into the Indian side reaching Gairibans not long after midday. (4 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 7 - Sandakphu (3690 metres)

Gairibans and the walk to Sandakphu is particularly interesting for bird enthusiasts with minivets, flycatchers, finches, redstarts, falconets and a number of other varieties seen from the trail. Following the jeep trail with frequent shortcuts, we walk through rhododendrons, some of the large tree variety, to Kalpokhri - a fair sized village beside a dark, prayer flag lined pond that gives the village its name. We stop for lunch at a comfortable teashop in Kalpokhri. We resume our reasonably level walk to another teashop from where the path climbs steeply to Sandakphu on the Singalila Ridge itself. At an altitude of over 3600 metres, Sandakphu commands views of Kangchenjunga, Jannu, Makalu, Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse and a number of high peaks in Sikkim and Bhutan like Chomolhari. (7 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 8 – Phalut (3420 metres)

We wake up early to walk to a platform overlooking Sandakphu with grand views all around. Today is quite a long day but is generally easy walking on the most spectacular section of the Singalila ridge. The undulating ridge trail runs north to the junction of Sikkim, Nepal and India. There are superb views of the Himalaya throughout the day and a walk along the Singalila Ridge is hard to beat for the sheer grandness of its views and the vastness of the surrounding landscapes with a series of ridges fading away to the Arun Valley in the west, the mountains of Sikkim and Bhutan to the north and east and the enormous bulk of Kangchenjunga directly ahead. We camp at Phalut. (7 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 9 – Sasamden

We stay on the ridge for the first part of today's walk but then descend through rhododendron and magnolia forest to reach our campsite at Sasamden, a beautiful campsite near a very small village in front of forest. (5 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 10 - Rimbick (2300 metres)

A downhill trail takes us to the floor of the Sri Khola valley before climbing through thick forests of the Singalila National Park to the roadhead of Rimbick. A fascinating day as it offers another opportunity to experience a walk through untouched parts of the eastern Himalayas followed by a section through a couple of orderly hillside villages allowing us to see the local lifestyle from close hand. We will stay at the Hotel Sherpa, as there is no proper campsite available. This lodge is run by a friendly Sherpa family and has the bonus of plenty of chilled beer. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight Hotel Sherpa. (BLD)

Day 11 – Pemayangtse (2090 metres)

After an early breakfast we set off for the 9 to 10 hour drive through tea gardens to Pemayangtse. Pemayangtse commands superb views of the Kangchenjunga range and of the trek route from Yuksom towards the Goecha La. We spend a relaxing evening watching the colours fade on spectacular Kangchenjunga. Overnight Hotel, Pemayangtse. (BLD)

Day 12 - Yuksom (1780 metres)

Early breakfast after which we have time to visit Pemayangtse monastery, the second oldest in Sikkim and home to over 100 lamas belonging to the Nyingmapa sect. The monastery also houses important artefacts and a 12-foot high wooden sculpture depicting Tibetan Buddhist religious iconography. It is a 3-hour drive through the narrow lowland valleys to the village of Yuksom, the road-head for the start of the Goecha La trek. Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 13 - Tsokha (2950 metres)

This is the longest trek day, a steadily rising trail through dense semi tropical forests for the first 4-5 hours where we cross the Perk Chu River on a suspension bridge and stop for a rest and a picnic lunch. From the bridge, a steep climb brings us to the tiny hamlet of Bakhim from where there are good views of the trail up from Yuksom.

A teashop here provides a plentiful supply of refreshing tea before we resume our steep climb for another 200 metres through forests of silver fir and cypress to the ridge top village of Tsokha. On a clear day, we can see the distant lights of Darjeeling to the south while the summit of Pandim (6770 metres) can be seen behind a ridge towards the north. Tsokha is a growing village with a mixed population of Lepchas yak herders and the more recently arrived Tibetan refugees. (7 to 8 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 14 - Dzongri (3990 metres)

We start early up a trail that initially zigzags through mixed temperate forests that give way to large swathes of rhododendron as we gain height. A 2-3 hour climb brings us to the large clearing at Phedang where we stop for a picnic lunch admiring the peaks of Pandim, Narsingh and Joponu now distinctly nearer.

A further climb of 2 hours by now completely through rhododendron forests and we are at the top of a ridge from where the trail undulates 2 km to the Dzongri campsite at 3990 metres. Dzongri, being in a natural depression can be rather cold and often shrouded in mist. (5 to 6 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 15 - Thangshing (3900 metres)

A pre-dawn climb to the top of the nearby ridge will reward early risers with a spectacular view of sunrise on Kangchenjunga and a host of other peaks close by like Rathong, 6683 metres, Kokthang 6150 metres, Kabru Dome 6604 metres, Forked Peak, 6116 metres to name just a few. After breakfast we set off along a trail that climbs up to a ridge that we follow for the next 5 km. The trail is through dwarf rhododendron and scrub juniper; there are increasingly close views of Pandim peak now directly ahead of us and of a succession of ridges fading into the distance towards central Sikkim. A steep descent follows bringing us to the Prek Chu river that was crossed on the first day's trek. We cross via a log bridge before we resume the gentle climb towards the large grassy area of Thangshing below Pandim ridge. Visible ahead is the old terminal moraines of the Oglathang Glacier that forms the head of the valley and the southern ridge of Kangchenjunga. (5 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 16 - Samiti Lake (4250 metres)

A short walk of about 2 hours - the trail very gradually ascends the Oglathang Valley through scrub juniper before coming to a part of the lateral moraine where the climb gets steeper. We climb over the moraine and then a brief descent to the campsite near the glacial Samiti Lake. The lake is holy to the Sikkimese; hence the prayer flags on poles near the shore. The afternoon is spent climbing the surrounding moraine ridges for views of Kangchenjunga and the neighbouring peaks; Pandim now rises over 2000 metres above our camp. (2 to 3 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 17 – Goecha La (4900 metres) return to Samiti Lake (4250 metres)

The highlight of the trek is the close view of the massive eastern wall of Kangchenjunga rising sheer 4200 metres above the Talung glacier as seen from the 4900 metres high Goecha La pass. It is an early start for the strenuous walk to Goecha La. The trail flanks the lake before climbing steeply on moraine ridges above the lake. As we gain height the mountain views are increasingly more spectacular. From the prayer flagged Goecha La the scene is dominated by the spectacular eastern wall of Kangchenjunga, which is only 5km away and rises more than 4000 metres above the Talung glacier. We return to camp near Samiti Lake. Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 18 - Tsokha (2950 metres)

We return to Tsokha avoiding the higher trail via Dzongri, we take a long walk through dense rhododendron forests along the slopes that lie to the right of the Prek Chu river emerging eventually at the Phedang clearing where we stop for lunch. Since this is a quiet trail through thick forests, we have excellent chances to see some of the birds and pheasants that live in these forests. A further 2 hours descent brings us back to Tsokha village. (7 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 19 - Yuksom (1750 metres)

A long descent back to Yuksom. A farewell dinner with the trekking crew and the yak men accompanied by generous amounts of Thomba (the local millet beer served in tall bamboo containers with a thin bamboo straw) and much singing and dancing makes for a fitting end to the trek. (6 hours walking). Overnight Camp. (BLD)

Day 20 – Kalimpong (1250 metres)

There is time for a relaxed breakfast before setting off for the 7 hour-long drive through tea gardens to Kalimpong. Kalimpong has for long been an important market town and a meeting place for traders from Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and the lowlands of Bengal. The temperate climate, fine mountain views, gardens; a number of gompas and a busy bazaar makes this an attractive place to relax. We stay at the delightful Himalayan Hotel, which still captures the romance of colonial times.

In the early years of the century the hotel was the family home of David Macdonald who accompanied Francis Younghusband to Tibet in 1904 and served as British Political Officer in Sikkim in charge of Britain's relations with Tibet. After he retired he turned the large family home into a hotel and it has remained in the Macdonald family ever since. It is a hotel of real charm and character and has been home to Everest expeditions from Mallory and Irvine in the 1920's to Hillary & Tenzing. Overnight Himalayan Hotel, Kalimpong. (BLD)

Day 21 – Kalimpong

A day to explore Kalimpong. Kalimpong straddles a northeasterly ridge flanked by two rivers, on the west the Rangit draining the Singalila range and on the east the Reli that joins the Tista River further south. We have a day to explore Kalimpong and the surrounding area. First we drive to the monastery viewpoint of Rinkingpong Hill, at 1400 metres it is one of two lookout points over the Kalimpong area. The hillsides around Kalimpong are still well forested and are home to 400 species of orchids, a third of all the Himalayan species of rhododendrons and thousands of other flowering plants. We would hope to visit at least one of the many nurseries on our way back into Kalimpong. After lunch we can explore the bazaars where there are many shops selling Tibetan, Sikkimese and Bhutanese handicrafts. Overnight Himalayan Hotel, Kalimpong. (BLD)

Day 22 – Delhi

An early start for the 5 to 6 hour drive to Bagdogra in time to catch the afternoon flight back to Delhi. Transfer to our hotel, rest of the day free. Overnight hotel. (B)

Day 23 – Depart Delhi

Transfer to international airport for the flight to UK. (B)

B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner

The day-to-day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions, difficulty with transportation and politics can lead to enforced changes. Because of this it is not possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the planned itinerary. The trip leader will make any changes, which are necessary.

INDIA EXTENSIONS

There are many interesting destinations, which offer an enjoyable variation to your holiday. The programmes can be tailored to suit individual requirements and we will be happy to suggest destinations and itineraries to compliment your own ideas. Here are a few suggestions.

Agra & the Taj Mahal: It is possible to visit Agra and the Taj Mahal and return to Delhi in a day. We will organise transport to and from Agra (by train or road) and provide an English-speaking guide for sightseeing in Agra. This is a long day and if you have the time you may prefer to overnight in Agra.

The Golden Triangle: This is one of the most popular extensions for adding on to your holiday in India. The Golden Triangle itinerary allows you to take in three of the best known sights of northern India, the incredible Taj Mahal in Agra, the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri and the 'pink city' of Jaipur in the colourful and romantic state of Rajasthan.

The Tiger Trail: Ranthambhore, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Kanha & Corbett Tiger Reserves need little introduction and are amongst the best places to see Tigers anywhere.

Kaziranga National Park: lies to the south of the mighty Brahmaputra river in the heart of Assam and is without doubt one of the most beautiful and unspoilt national parks in the whole of Asia.

Bhutan: A five-day cultural visit to include Paro, Thimpu and Punakha.

Please Note: If you plan to extend your stay in India it is essential we are informed at the time of booking so that alternative international flight dates can be booked.

TREKKING IN INDIA WITH CLASSIC JOURNEYS

- With over 25 years experience we believe the quality of our India treks is second to none.
- We operate fully supported, environmentally sustainable group treks.
- Our itineraries are carefully planned to provide extra rest and acclimatisation days and as a reserve against bad weather.
- Our Indian leaders are professionally trained and are among the most experienced in India. Who better to look after you than your professional local leader, who speaks the language and knows the culture, intimately.
- Our friendly trekking crews are dedicated to ensuring your holiday is the best it can be. They will accompany you along the trail, set up camp and prepare your meals.
- Porters or pack animals carry your main baggage for you.
- Sleeping bags, cotton liners, mattresses, kit bags and basic first aid kits are provided on all of our India treks.
- We provide insurance, equipment and gear for our crew and porters and aim to keep our impact on the environment to a minimum.

The International Porter Protection Group (IPPG) works to improve the conditions of the mountain porters in the tourism industry worldwide. Classic Journeys supports the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG) and are the first UK trekking company to make a commitment of donating on an annual basis. For more information about the IPPG check out their website: www.ipg.net

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

If you would like Classic Journeys to book your international flights, please tick the flight inclusive package box on the booking form. Please advise if you have a preferred airline you would like to travel with or if you have a preferred airport you would like to travel from. Classic Journeys will then book your international flights and advise you of the actual cost.

There is a wide choice of airlines flying to and from India from the UK including Jet Airways, Virgin Atlantic, British Airways, Emirates, KLM, Qatar Airways and Gulf Air. Depending on flight arrival times, you may require an additional nights hotel accommodation to allow you immediate access to your hotel room.

To discuss your international flight options, please give the Classic Journeys office a call and we will advise on up to date flight prices and timings for your chosen trip.

Baggage Allowance: For hold luggage this is normally around 20kg and you should aim to keep to this weight. For internal flights the weight limit may be 15kg. Classic Journeys is not responsible for any excess baggage charges incurred.

Land Only Clients: Land only clients who are making their own flight arrangements should meet up with the group at the hotel in Delhi. We can arrange airport transfers if needed and will provide hotel contact details.

If you have booked on a land only basis and are making your own flight arrangements, you must check with the Classic Journeys office that your chosen holiday has reached the minimum numbers required and is **guaranteed to operate** before paying for your air tickets. We cannot be held liable, in cases where we cancel your trip, for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made.

PRICING

If you choose the Land Only plus international flights package Classic Journeys will book your international flight and advise you of the cost. The price of the tour will be the Land Price plus the cost of international flights on your chosen airline. Depending on the airline flights are booked with, you will pay for these flights with your final balance, 8 weeks before the trip departure. With some airlines, flights have to be paid for on making the flight booking and we will require full payment for the air tickets in order to purchase the tickets. In this situation we advise paying for your air tickets as soon as possible to secure the lowest fare.

Airfares and taxes are subject to change and if the fare has increased before the final balance has been paid, the additional cost will be passed on and detailed on the invoice.

INCLUDED IN THE COST

- Hotel accommodation on a twin share basis (unless single has been requested) for the nights listed in the itinerary
- All meals as specified
- Airport Transfers when choosing land only plus international flight package.
- All internal transport as the itinerary
- Sightseeing tours where specified
- All trekking arrangements including trekking permits, National Park entrance fees, tents (2 people sharing unless single has been requested), sleeping bags, basic karri mat (mattress), guides, porters & cook
- Local Leader
- Cordura kit bag

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST

- International flight from the UK
- Airport taxes
- Transfers for Land Only packages when choosing your own flight arrangements
- Visa fees
- Medical examination (if required) & vaccination costs
- Personal expenditure, bar bills, laundry, telephone calls, etc
- Porters, guides & other tips
- Meals not specified
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Travel insurance
- Optional trips
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond Classic Journeys control
- Anything not specified in the Cost Includes section

GROUP SIZE

Minimum 4, Maximum 14

This holiday will operate once the minimum group size has been reached.

GUIDE / TOUR LEADER

On arrival in India you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The trek will be led by a local leader and supported by a trekking crew to look after the group. Your leader will be with you throughout the trip to guide you along the route, help organise and interpret in the villages and assist the group in any other way possible. Our leaders are fluent in English and Hindi or Punjabi as well as often-another language, and have walked in the area many times. They will try and give you a real insight into the local way of life and, for those interested, will happily give some basic Hindi or Punjabi lessons while walking or over evening drinks. Although not specialists, they are interested in the area's mountains, flora and fauna. Please ask your guide/leader if you have any queries during your holiday e.g. rest breaks, type and quantity of food or any other specific requests, as they will do their best to adjust the trip accordingly and cater for your needs and tastes.

TREK GRADE

MODERATE TREKKING: A trek that is well within the capabilities of most people although a reasonable level of fitness is required as there will be much ascent and descent with the occasional difficult day. The days average 5 to 7 hours walking on good trails, with a maximum altitude of 4900 metres, although there is one day of up to 8 hours. The most strenuous part of the trek is the walk to the Goecha La pass from our camp near Samiti Lake. The route has been planned to allow steady acclimatisation and taken slowly, the fit should have few problems. A regular hill walking background is desirable (Lake District, Peak District, North Wales or similar) but train well and you'll be ready for these trips.

A TYPICAL DAY TREKKING

The day normally starts with an early morning mug of tea (or coffee), enjoyed while still in our sleeping bags at around 6.00 am. During breakfast camp will be struck and the porters or ponies and pony men set off. We start walking after breakfast, between 7:30 and 8:30 am. Everyone is free to walk at the pace, which is comfortable for them, stopping along the way to explore villages and take photographs. You will have been given a lunch box at breakfast time and we will stop at around 11:00 am for lunch. Camp is usually reached at around 3 to 4 pm. Afternoon tea and biscuits or snacks are served, and at around 6:30 to 7:00 pm. the evening meal is ready.

When sightseeing we generally leave after breakfast. Some of the sightseeing involves easy walking although not always on paved level ground. There will be many photographic opportunities, although please respect local people and either ask permission or use a telephoto lens before taking their photograph. Remember many people do not like their photograph taken.

HEALTH & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

The fitter you are before embarking on a trekking holiday the more enjoyment you are going to get out of it. You should be in good condition for the activity you are going to do - lots of walking. Once you decide you are going on a trek, it is wise to begin a fitness programme. The best way for you to prepare is to take a lot of walks, particularly up and down hills. Jogging, aerobics, cycling and fast swimming will also help but should be in addition to walking outdoors. We carry a basic first aid kit but recommend that each person also carry a personal first aid kit including any prescription medication they require; a suggested contents list will be provided on booking in the country information dossier. We also provide details of the recommended vaccinations needed however you will need to talk to your doctor, practice nurse or a travel clinic for the latest advice on health recommendations.

ACCOMMODATION

In Delhi we typically stay at small friendly hotels, typically the hotel Thirty Three, hotel Connaught, or the Ashok Country Resort. At Darjeeling typically we stay in the Cedar Inn, Mayfair or New Elgin Hotel. At Pemayangtse and Kalimpong we stay in comfortable and charming character hotels. On trek we will be camping; we use spacious 2 person, Vango Mk V tents (or similar), provide thick sleeping mattresses, chairs, tables, cutlery and toilet tents. Our trekking crews set up and break camp for you. Please note that sometimes the mentioned accommodation is fully booked in which case we will use similar standard accommodation.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS

If you are a single person booking this holiday you do not have to pay single supplements, if you are happy to share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single client of the same gender. However your booking is accepted only on the understanding that if no roommate is available then you accept a single supplement will be levied. Single supplements are payable if you specifically request to have a room/tent to yourself. If you have requested single accommodation we will do our best to secure this although this may not always be possible.

FOOD

Breakfast in Delhi and all meals elsewhere included.

Most hotel and lodge restaurants usually provide both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, continental, Indian and traditional cuisine. Please ask the staff if you have any specific request, especially regarding flavours and spices, as they will do their best to adjust menus accordingly and cater for your tastes.

Our cooks provide varied and delicious local and western food while on trek. There are continental menus as well as local cuisine such as tasty curries, chapattis, vegetables, samosas, lentils and variety of rice dishes and other nourishing meals. As much as possible, locally bought fresh vegetables are used although in some remote areas they are not available. Fresh fruit should always be peeled and avoid salads or raw vegetables. Our staff ensure a good levels of hygiene for all food preparations.

WEATHER

The Sikkim area experiences cold winters between November to February and monsoon affects Darjeeling from the end of May to the middle of September, visiting these areas is therefore best between late March to mid May or October through to mid November. March to early May is when sunshine is quite abundant. Temperatures on trek will range between daytime highs of 20 to 25°C with quite chilly evening temperatures (normally 5°C), but temperatures may drop to below freezing (-10°C) at our high altitude camps. The mornings are generally clear with clouds building up during the afternoon but these usually disappear at night to reveal a beautiful nights sky. At the lower altitudes, Darjeeling, the days and evenings are pleasantly warm (6-14°C).

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

We will provide all camping equipment including roomy two man tents, a sleeping bag and mattress. You will need to provide personal equipment and clothing. You may also want to bring along a Thermarest for added comfort although we provide a basic mattress. You do not need any specialist equipment or clothing for this trek. Basically you need similar clothing to what you would take on a winter walk in the British hills. A detailed equipment list is provided on booking. We also provide a spacious Cordura kit bag, which will be given to you before your trek and is yours to keep. We provide a very comprehensive equipment list in the information dossier, which we send you on confirmation of booking.

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

You will require a passport valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry into India; British Nationals also require an Indian entry visa, which should be obtained prior to departure. In June 2008, the India High Commission outsourced their visa processing to a third party agency called VFS. For up-to-date information on how to apply for your India visa, please visit the VFS website: <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk>. You may also want to check the High Commission of India's website at www.hcilondon.net

INSURANCE

Insurance is essential and is a condition of booking with Classic Journeys that you have adequate travel insurance cover. It is very important that you obtain insurance cover against the usual risks associated with travel, from the time of booking your holiday until the time you return home. Please ensure that your insurance provides adequate protection against the two major concerns: medical/repatriation expenses while abroad and cancellation/curtailment charges in the event that you, a travelling companion or a close relative fall ill either before or during the tour. For trekking holidays your travel insurance must contain evidence of satisfactory cover for repatriation and helicopter rescue.

Classic Journeys do not provide any advice on travel insurance. Classic Journeys is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd. who are Authorised and Regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Campbell Irvine is a specialist travel insurance broker. The comprehensive policy they issue provides 24-hour medical emergency assistance and covers altitude and all adventurous activities undertaken on our holidays. For single-trip policies, the insurance provides cover for both UK and worldwide residents at very competitive rates. In addition an annual policy is available to United Kingdom residents.

To obtain insurance cover visit the insurance section of the Classic Journeys website and follow the links to the Campbell Irvine Ltd. website. Alternatively contact the Classic Journeys office and we will send you details and an application form.

We require confirmation of your insurance, the policy number and 24-hour emergency telephone number who ever you take insurance with.

SUGGESTED READING

Insight Guide to Sikkim

Into India: John Keay, John Murray.

Birds of the Indian Subcontinent: Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp.

Field Guide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalaya: Salim Ali, Oxford University Press.

Himalayan Flowers & Trees: Dorothy Mierow & Tirtha Bahadur Strestha, Shayogi Press 1978.

Kangchenjunga Adventure: Frank Smythe. An account of an attempt to climb Kangchenjunga in 1930 and exploration of the area. Out of print but an interesting book to get hold of.

Kangchenjunga Climbed: George Band. Details of the first successful expedition to climb Kangchenjunga. "The Mountain World" 1956/57 edition.

MAPS

Sikkim Himalaya: Schneider 1:150,000

BOOKS & MAPS AVAILABLE FROM:

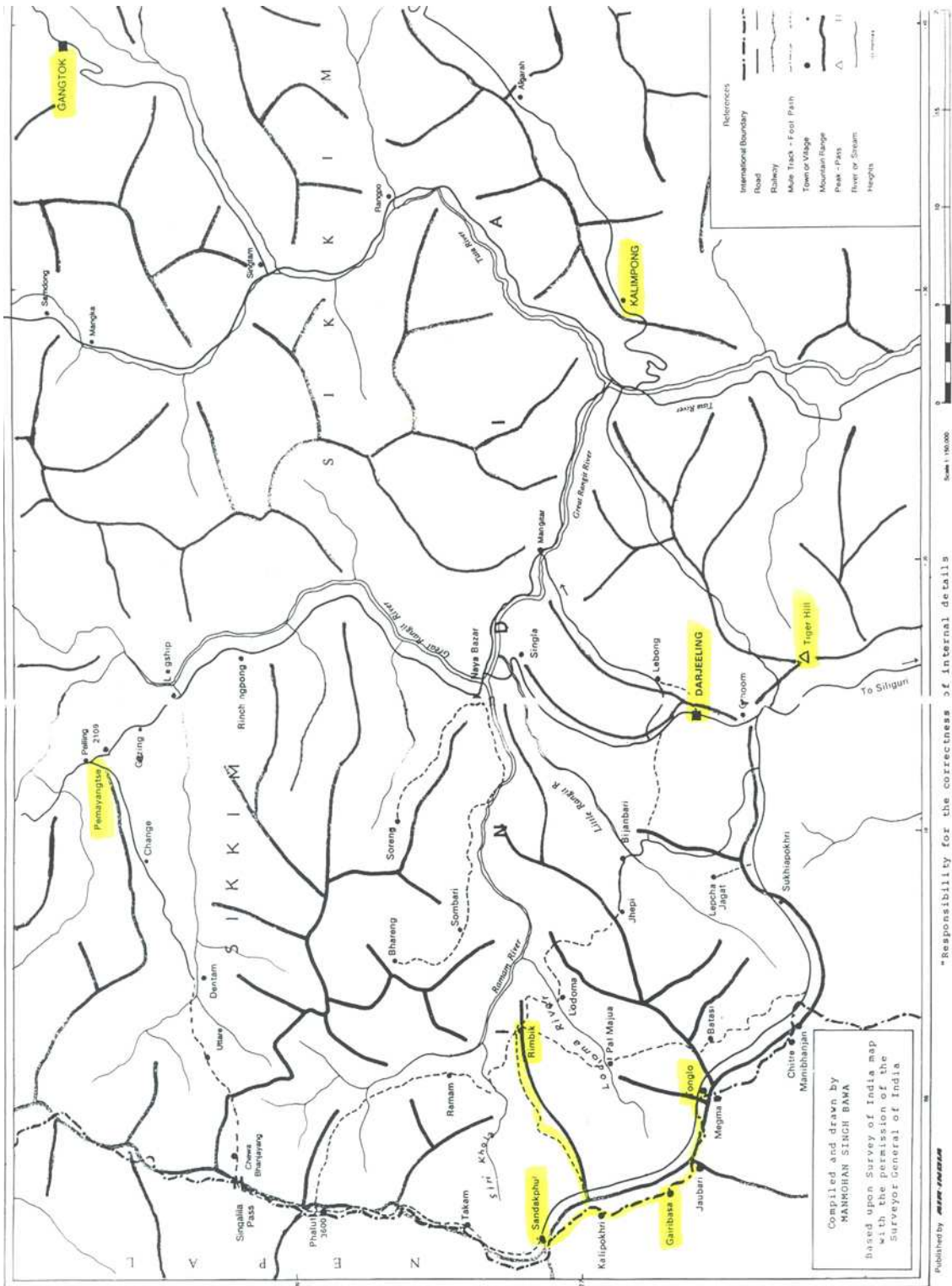
Stanfords, 12 Long Acre, London, WC2E 9LP 020 7836 1321

Cicerone at Booksources, 50 Cambuslang Road, Cambuslang, Glasgow, G32 8NB

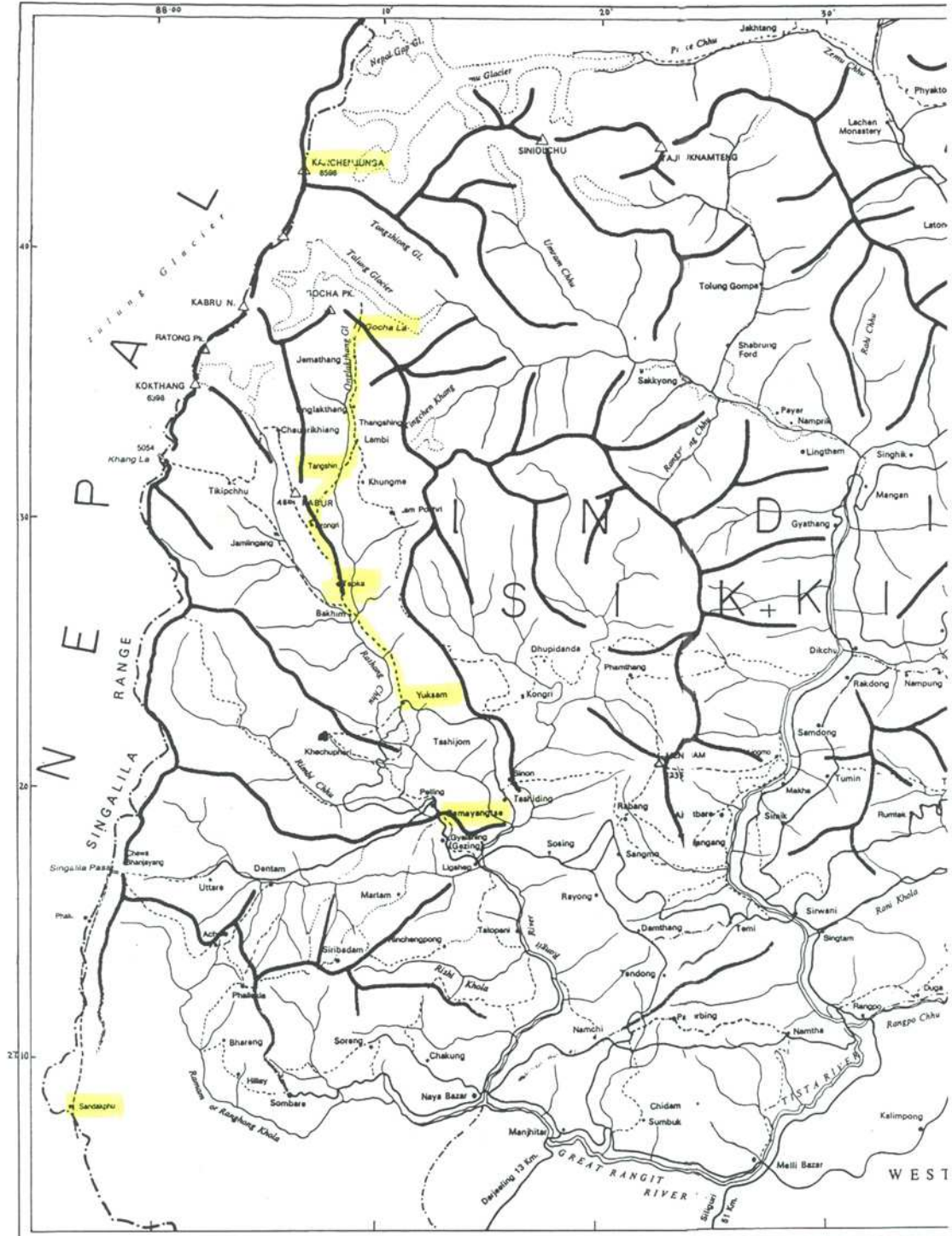
Amazon, www.amazon.co.uk

Cordee, 3A De Montfort Street, Leicester. Tel: 0116 2543579

If you have any questions or would like to know more about any aspect of this trek please do not hesitate to contact the Classic Journeys Office.



SIKKIM Trekking Routes



Published by **ALBERT SIMONSON**

"Responsibility for the correctness of internal details shown on the maps rests with the publisher."

Classic Journeys **ADVENTURE TRAVEL**

Our Experience is Your Guarantee

Classic Journeys have a proven record of operating top quality, adventure holidays with over 25 years experience. Our ground agents and friends are the best in the business. They have an unsurpassed knowledge and ability for organising treks, expeditions, wildlife and adventure travel and all have excellent contacts, extremely important when dealing with local bureaucracy.

An important aspect of our success is our team of reliable and professional leaders, both western and local who ensure everything runs smoothly and efficiently. All our leaders are experienced, enthusiastic and have travelled widely. Working with our experienced and friendly staff, you can be sure of a high quality, personal service that many of our clients have come to expect.

Your Complete Financial Protection



Classic Journeys is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator with an Air Travel Organisers Licence (ATOL) issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (ATOL 3022). The purpose of the ATOL scheme is to provide financial protection for your holiday arrangements. An ATOL is a legal requirement for anyone selling air holidays to the public. In order to obtain this licence we have to continually satisfy the very rigorous standards and provide a bond, you can book your holiday with Classic Journeys in complete confidence that your payment is fully protected.

How To Book

Before making your booking please make sure that you have read the relevant tour itinerary. This can be downloaded from the tour page on our website, or you can request a copy to be posted to you from the Classic Journeys office. You should also read our General Information and Booking Conditions on our website. It is important that you choose a trip that is well suited to your experience and abilities. If you have any doubt or need to chat through any of our tours, please call the Classic Journeys office. Our advice is based on first hand experience and we are always happy to talk about our journeys.

Provisional Booking: It is sensible to check if places are still available on any Classic Journeys tour you are interested in before sending your booking form to us. We will be happy to hold open space for you for up to 7 days (up to 14 days if you live outside Europe) in order to give you sufficient time to send in your booking form and deposit.

Definite Bookings: To make a definite booking you must either complete and sign our standard booking form which can be printed off from our website at www.classicjourneys.co.uk and post or fax it to us, or complete the on-line booking form and transmit it to us electronically. You also need to pay us the required deposit as detailed on the booking form. If you are submitting an on-line booking form and decide you wish to pay the deposit by credit or debit card, you can, if you are concerned about security, telephone your card details to us.

Please note: We cannot confirm a booking until we receive your completed and signed booking form. Any delay in submitting your booking form may put at risk your place on your chosen trip, or flights.

If you would like further information, help with planning your holiday or details of extending your holiday, please don't hesitate to contact the Classic Journeys office.