

Nestled amongst the mighty Himalayas is a solitary peak exquisite to trekkers around the globe. So great is its beauty that it has made its way into the hearts of several blog channels and veteran trekkers. It's named Sandakphu. Situated high up in the Himalayas in the Singalila range, Sandakphu's natural beauty is breathtakingly spectacular and is also known as the 'The Trekkers Paradise'. The surreal beauty of Darjeeling against the backdrop of its magnificent hills is a gift of nature to mankind and the perfect way to explore it is by trekking on this land. The forests thick with rhododendrons introduce the Himalayan charm and this keeps getting better as you discover meadows full of wild flowers, secluded settlements and enthralling landscapes while you trek on to Sandakphu. By the time you reach Sandakphu, if you think you have had a lion's share of this raw natural beauty, then you have another thing coming. The climb up to the peak is greeted by the panoramic view of the five highest peaks of the world: Mt. Lhotse, Mt. Makalu, Mt. Kanchenjunga, Mt. Everest and Mt. Pandim. The first view of these five peaks which appear strung together in a snowy arc like a necklace is guaranteed to leave you breathless with wonder and excitement. The landscape of Sandakphu boasts of a bio-diversity unlike anything in the world with more than 600 different varieties of orchids, magnolias and other sub-alpine flowers. Now for all of you anxious for more details, here is our itinerary below:

Day 1: Arrival at New Jalpaiguri Station (NJP) / Bagdogra Airport (IXB) and transfer to Darjeeling

After arrival at Bagdogra Airport/ New Jalpaiguri, guests will be shuttled to Darjeeling. Guests can spend the day in Darjeeling getting acclimatized to the local climate.

Day 2: Darjeeling to Manebhanjyang and trek to Tonglu

Guests will be taken to Manebhanjyang, a village right on the India-Nepal border. This is the place from where first two expeditions for the Mt. Everest started in the year 1922 and 1924. Here we join up with our trekking team and start with a short first days trek along a steadily ascending trail to Tonglu. We stop over at Chitray (2525 m) where we can visit a 70 years old Buddhist monastery, belonging to the Nyingma-Pa sect.

Day 3: Tonglu to Kalpokhri

We trek from Tonglu to Kalpokhri which lasts for approximately 4hrs. It is a rather easy day for trek with few short climbs but mostly downhill to the little settlement of Gahiribas. This route passes through bamboo glades and the rich rhododendron forest. From Gahiribas we trek for another 2 hours to reach Kalpokhri.

Day 4: Kalpokhri to Sandakphu

Walking through Gahiribas / Sandakphu (3660m, 7hrs trek) is a beautiful part of this trek. Although the trail is mainly uphill through bamboo glades, Rhododendrons and the beautiful Magnolia forest to the crest of the Singalila ridge, the stunning view of the distant Mt. Everest and Makalu and the much closer Mt. Kanchenjunga and its associated peaks, is worth every effort.

Day 5: Sandakphu to Phalut

It is one of the highest peaks in the Singalila range and is situated 8 km North- West of Darjeeling town. The stretch from Sandakphu to Phalut is the most enthralling part of this trek. The burnt silver- fir forest makes it the most beautiful sight that one will ever come across. After

about 5.5 hours the trail begins to climb through a series of zigzag hills until one reaches the trekker hut from where Phalut is approximately a 20 minutes' walk. A spectacular view of snowy range is obtained from the summit which is also the tri-junction of Sikkim, West Bengal & Nepal. The general panorama is the same as seen from Sandakphu except the Kanchanjunga range looks much larger and majestic.

Day 6: Phalut to Rammam

About a 5 hours walk, Rammam is approximately 15kms away from Phault. From Phalut the trail again descends from the ridge to the lovely virgin forest of chestnuts, pine, hemlock and a lot of other sub-alpine vegetation till it reaches the meeting of a stream called Gorkhey Kholaw with the Rammam river. From this point the trek is a little challenging and begins to climb towards Samandian which is a lovely plateau and also a small forest village.

Day 07: Rammam to Rimbik and transfer to Darjeeling

We head towards Rimbik. From Rammam the trail is almost level for about first 9 km & again it descends to Srikhola. The trail is steep for about 1 km from where it levels out again till it reaches Rimbick. Rimbick is the last leg of our trek. From here we will be shuttled to Darjeeling in a jeep. After arrival to Darjeeling, the rest of the day is reserved for the guests to explore and experience Darjeeling on their own.

Our recommendations:

- Try authentic Tibetan cuisine at Dekling or Kunga, near Club Side.
- Tibetan art shopping at Habib Mallick and Sons, Chowrasta
- Authentic Darjeeling Tea shopping at Nathumalls.
- Spend the evening at Glenary's. A cafe famous for its baked products
- Walk around the Mall in the evening.
- Terrace top English breakfast at Keventer's.

Day 8: In Darjeeling

Early rising at 4:00 am and we head towards Tiger Hill, a place famous for sunrise over Mt. Kanchendzonga. On our way back we will visit the Ghoom Monastery and Batasia Loop (*The Batasia Loop was an engineering marvel of its time. It is a spiral railway created to lower the gradient of ascent of the Toy Train. At this point, the track spirals around over itself through a tunnel*). From here we head back to our hotel where breakfast will be served.

After breakfast we head out for 7 points sightseeing. We visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, PNZ Zoological Park (*closed on Thursday*), Tenzing Rock, Tibetan Refugee Centre (*closed on Sunday*), Tea Garden (*outer view*), Rope way, Japanese Temple and Peace Pagoda. In the evening we return to the hotel for overnight stay.

Day 9: Darjeeling to New Jalpaiguri Station (NJP) / Bagdogra Airport (IXB)

Bid adieu to Darjeeling and take back countless memories as we head back to Bagdogra/New Jalpaiguri.