

TEA HOLIDAYS ASSAM- DARJEELING- SIKKIM

12 Nights/ 13 Days
Best Travel Period: Mid October to Mid May



P U R V I D I S C O V E R Y . C O M

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Tour through the lush tea estates of Upper Assam, Darjeeling and Gangtok. Learn how different varieties of tea are processed in surrounding plantations and regions.
- Experience a tea tasting session with a professional planter.
- Live in colonial splendour.
- Visit Mukul Organic Tea Plantation.
- Visit the Singpho tribal village known for its traditional organic tea.
- Visit Tocklai Tea Research Station at Jorhat.
- Enjoy a local dance performance.
- Visit Majuli – the largest inhabited river island in the world.
- Visit Kaziranga National Park – home to the Great Indian One Horned Rhinoceros.

DAY 01- BAGDOGDRA- DARJEELING

Receive at Bagdogra airport and later drive to Darjeeling (72 kms / 3.5 hours). On arrival check in at Windamere hotel for 03 nights. Evening leisurely walk around the Mall/Chowrasta which is the centre of Darjeeling.



DAY 02- DARJEELING

Today we do for day tour to Makaibari Tea Estate (40 kms / 02 hrs). Enjoy tea plantation tour, factory visit for tea processing and tea tasting. Later in the afternoon drive back to hotel.

Or Alternatively

Post breakfast, visit Happy Valley Tea Estate (05 kms) to see the tea processing, tea tasting and garden tour. Later take a Joy Ride in the famous Darjeeling Himalayan Steam Train (approximately 02 hrs journey to and from Darjeeling Railway Station). Evening visit local market.

Or Alternatively

Post breakfast, visit Happy Valley Tea Estate (05 kms) to see the tea processing, tea tasting and garden tour. Later visit Rock Garden (11 kms) which falls amidst tea bushes and has a natural and scenic water fall along with small rivers around. Evening take a Joy Ride in the famous Darjeeling Himalayan Steam Train (approximately 02 hrs journey to and from Darjeeling Railway Station). Evening train timings usually at 04.00 PM.

Note :

- Tea Factory remains closed on Sunday.
- Only one option to be opted for the day's visit.

DAY 03- DARJEELING

Early morning drive to Tiger Hill at 0400 hrs which is the sunrise point (13 kms). On a clear day Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Everest can be seen as well. Visit Ghoom Monastery on the way back to the hotel as it is the oldest Monastery in Darjeeling. Post breakfast visit famous Himalayan Zoological Park, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI), Tenzing Rock, Ropeway which is a cable car ride, Tibetan Refugee Centre (TRC)



and the Japanese Temple also known as Peace Pagoda.

Or Alternatively

Today post breakfast visit Tiger Hill (13 kms). On a clear day Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Everest can be seen as well. Visit Ghoom Monastery on the way back to the hotel as it is the oldest Monastery in Darjeeling. Later visit famous Himalayan Zoological Park, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI), Tenzing Rock, Ropeway which is a cable car ride, Tibetan Refugee Centre (TRC) and the Japanese Temple also known as Peace Pagoda.

Or Alternatively

Early morning drive to Tiger Hill at 0400 hrs which is the sunrise point (13 kms). On a clear day Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Everest can be seen as well. Visit Ghoom Monastery on the way back to the hotel as it is the oldest Monastery in Darjeeling. Post breakfast visit famous Himalayan Zoological Park, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI), Tibetan Refugee Centre (TRC) and Rock Garden.

- Note :**
- **Himalayan Zoological Park, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI) and Museum remains closed on Thursday while Tibetan Refugee Centre remains closed on Sunday**
 - **Only one option to be opted for the day's visit.**

DAY 04- DARJEELING- GANGTOK

Today post breakfast we drive to Gangtok (105 kms / 04 hours). On arrival check in at Netuk House for 03 nights. Evening leisurely walk around the main market on Gangtok.

DAY 05- GANGTOK

After breakfast explore in and around Gangtok. Return back to the resort late afternoon.

Institute of Tibetology: World renowned Worldwide Centre for Study of Buddhist philosophy and religion. It houses rare thankas, statues and many more artifacts.

Dodrul Chorten (Stupa): This stupa has 108 prayer wheel encircling it. It was built by Trulshik Rimpoche, head of the Nyingmapa sect of the Tibetan Buddhism.

Directorate of handicrafts and handloom: Centre for promoting and keeping alive traditional arts and crafts. Some of their products consist of exquisite carpets, blankets and shawls.

Tsuk Ihalkhang / Royal Chapel: The yellow roofed Royal Chapel holds the famous lama dance show known as the kagyed dance at the end of December. The Chapel has the most impressive varied murals, Buddhist images and vast collection of manuscripts.

The Gangtok Mall: The town's best shopping area is the Main market also called MG Marg. Adjacent to the mall is the local produce bazaar of Lal market, where stalls sell dried fish, yak's cheese and yeast for making the local millet beer (Chaang)

Note : Cottage Industry and Institute of Tibetology remains closed on Sunday's and Government Holidays

DAY 06- GANGTOK

After breakfast depart for Bermoik Tea Garden resort via Rumtek monastery. Return back to the resort late afternoon.

Rumtek Monastery: The Center for the Kagyupa sect of the Tibetan Buddhism. It is 24 kms from Gangtok and is the closest replica of the Tsurpu monastery in Tibet.

Later in the afternoon drive to Bermoik Village (30 mins) and visit Bermoik Tea Garden for a session of Tea tasting. This involves a mild hike to the garden from the main road.

Note : Tea Factory remains closed on Sunday

DAY 07- GANGTOK- BAGDOGRA- DIBRUGARH

In time transfer to Bagdogra airport (4 hrs) to board flight to Dibrugarh. On arrival at Dibrugarh airport received and transferred to Mancotta/Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow. Afternoon take a tea walk in Mancotta Tea Estate. Evening enjoy a dance performance (Bihu) by an ethnic dance group at Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow. Overnight at Mancotta/Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow.



Dibrugarh is the gateway to the “Hidden Land” of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Myanmar. The Ahoms from Thailand came through Northern Myanmar to this area in the 13th century to establish their Empire which thrived in the ancient land of Assam. It is the “Camellia” town of Upper Assam, an undisturbed haven, with its rich tea gardens resembling a lush green carpet. Experience and enjoy the richness of these tea gardens while staying at the Heritage Chang Bungalows. These are constructed on stilts and are situated in a serene atmosphere free from pollution.

When the British established their tea plantations in the mid-19th century they quickly built comfortable bungalows designed to make life as pleasant as possible in what, was to them, a hostile and strange land. One of the main features of these buildings has given rise to their name – CHANG BUNGALOWS. Chang in the local language means “raised on stilts” and the design served multi purposes- to keep the house cool by allowing the breeze to blow underneath and to keep both water and animals out!

Bihu is the most popular folk dance of Assam. The people of Assam are very proud of its unique position among all other such dances of India. Except Bhangra (the popular folk dance of Punjab), no other folk dance in India can compete with the rhythmic exuberance of the Bihu dance. ‘Bihu’ performed by young men and women reflects youthful passion and joy rejuvenating life during the spring season, accompanied by songs woven around the theme of love and physical yearning. The dance is performed by all irrespective of caste, creed and religion.



DAY 08: TEA TOUR

Today we visit Ethelwold Tea Estate, Mancotta Tea Estate and Mukul Organic Tea Plantation to know all about CTC & Orthodox tea. Also experience of a Tea tasting session of different types of tea with one of the knowledgeable person in the field of tea / practicing Estate Manager.



A Tea Tour through old heritage tea garden gives an insight into the different activities that vary from season to season. It teaches us all about tea- its origin, how it is grown, tea tasting and its quality. During the winter months the dormant bushes are pruned to ensure vigorous growth during the warmer months. Once the rains begin, and the temperature rises, the gardens come alive with teams of colourfully dressed tea pluckers, predominantly ladies as they are said to be better able to pluck the delicate buds and leaves. The harvest, which goes on continuously from March to November, is taken everyday to the factory where it undergoes an age old process of being turned into the finished product. All stages of the process are carefully controlled to ensure that the tea that leaves the factory is only of the highest quality, a quality that has made Assam tea world famous.

Note:

Visit to tea factory is subject to being operational on the day of the visit. There is no tea plucking between December till mid March and hence the actual manufacturing process of tea cannot be demonstrated when one visits the factory during this period. Factory also remains closed on Monday's of the week.

DAY 09: DIBRUGARH- MARGERITA- DIBRUGARH.

Today post breakfast we drive to Margherita (100 kms / 2 ½ hrs) to visit a Singpho tribal village which produces traditional Organic Tea (Optional at Supplement Cost). Enroute at Digboi, we visit Oil Museum and the 2nd World War Allied Forces Cemetery where 200 graves are permanently maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Later drive back to Dibrugarh and overnight

Digboi: Digboi is a small but wonderful town in



Tinsukia district in the north-eastern part of the state of Assam, India. Petroleum oil was discovered here in late 19th century and the Digboi oilfield is one of the oldest oil fields. With a significant number of British professionals working for the Assam Oil Company as late as until the decade following the independence of India, Digboi had a well developed infrastructure and a number of bungalows unique to the town. It has a world class golf course with 18 holes as part of the Digboi Club.

Singpho people are Theravada Buddhists by religion. The Singphos are divided into a number of clans, each under a Chief known as “Gam”. They were the first to introduce the tea culture in Assam. Producers of Organic Tea coins, packed in silver foils and ready to use-dip the coin into a pot of hot water and it is ready to drink is gaining immense popularity in Europe and Southeast Asian countries. The entire process of manufacturing the tea is done in a traditional manner without the use of any machines or gadgets. The tea is sold under the brand name Phalap (meaning tea in the Singpho language). The loose tea is packed in bamboo containers so that the traditional properties are maintained and it is free from any preservatives or chemicals.

Note : Digboi oil Museum remains closed on Monday of the week.

Or alternatively

Post breakfast drive to Naharkatiya (60 kms/01 ½ hrs) and visit Namphake Village, inhabited by the Tai Phakial people. Visit the Buddhist Monastery at the village and also interact with the local people to know more about their rich tradition and culture.

Later drive to Tinsukia (01 hr) and take a boat ride at Maguri Beel on a country boat to see some birdlife. Evening drive back to Dibrugarh (01 ½ hrs) and overnight at Mancotta/Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow.

Namphake Village is the largest of the Tai-Phake villages in Assam, boasting 70 odd families, which trace their ancestry to the great Tai race. The village folk speak a dialect similar to the language in Thailand and still follow the traditional customs and dress code of the great Tai race. The hamlet is also home to the Namphake Buddhist Monastery, one of the oldest and most respected Buddhist Monasteries in Assam. They are Buddhist in religion. They have their own separate scripts and has also preserved in a few manuscripts, which are mainly religious scriptures. These manuscripts are written in Tai-scripts, which are preserved in their village Vihars.



Tinsukia - The ancient name of Tinsukia was Bangmara and was also originally known as Changmai Pathar. It was the capital of the Muttack Kingdom. Bangmara city was built by King Sarbananda Singha with the help of his Minister Gopinath Barbaruah alias Godha. The city was built originally in the middle of where the present Tinsukia city is situated (near Senairam H.S. School). As legend goes- Sarbananda Singha, asked Godha Baruah to dig a triangular shaped pond in Bangmara which is now known as “Tinikunia Pukhuri”. In 1884 a Dibru-Sadiya Rail line was constructed, and a station was setup near “Tinikunia Phukhuri”- this was subsequently christened Tinsukia. Since then the city is known as Tinsukia.

Maguri-Motapung Beel – is in Tinsukia District of Assam. It is a wetland complex which is part of Dibru Saikhowa , and is located just outside the Dibru Saikhowa National Park and Biosphere Reserve. Maguri-Motapung Beel is located in the southern bank of the Dibru River, ‘Beel’ is the local name for a lake with marshy areas around it’s edges. The Beel is connected to the Dibru River by a system of channels and is very rich in aquatic life especially waterfowl and grassland birds. Best time to visit is November to March.



Note : Only one option to be opted for the day's visit.

DAY 10 – DIBRUGARH-JORHAT- MAJULI, ASSAM

Today post breakfast we drive to Jorhat (03 ½ hrs) and visit Tocklai Tea Research Station. Later post lunch drive to Neematighat to board country boat to ABN Charaidew I- Floating Heritage hotel on the Brahmaputra. Check in and overnight at the boat.

Tocklai Tea Research Association (TRA) is a registered co-operative society dedicated to scientific research and extension for improvement in productivity and quality of tea in North East India. Research on all aspects of tea cultivation and processing is carried out at the Tocklai Experimental Station, Jorhat. It is the oldest and the largest research station of its kind in the world.

Note : TRA remains closed on Sunday of the week

DAY 11 - MAJULI ISLAND- KAZIRANGA

Today, after breakfast, board your country boat, which will take you to Majuli Island (approx 1 ½ Hrs boat ride), one of the world's largest river islands. Majuli Island, inhabited by Mising tribes, Deori and Sonowal Kachari tribes, is considered to be the heartland of Assamese culture. The great 15th century Assamese saint and reformer, SrimantaSankardev had come down here and set up 'satras' or 'monasteries' preaching a monotheist branch of Hinduism called Vaishnavism, which motivated and established a socio-religious movement that ultimately shaped the island's



Assamese society and culture into what it is today.

Once you reach Majuli, embark on a full day's excursion by SUV (Tata Sumo/Bolero) on the island. Visit the famous mask making monastery of Samaguri – which still practices this ancient tradition of Vaishnavism. From here, drive to Uttar Kamalabari Satra, another monastery that's known for its monastic dance form. Afterwards, interact with the monks, which will allow you to get a deeper insight into how monks live their lives here in the island. Later, go for a walk into one of the Mising villages, and observe this riverine tribe's way of live as well as interact with the lovely tribal folk. Late afternoon, transfer to the Kamalabari ferry point where your country boat will be waiting to take you back to Neemati Ghat. Later continue drive to Kaziranga (02 hrs). On arrival check in at hotel for 02 nights.

Kaziranga National Park - Kaziranga National Park - is a World Heritage Site, where more than 75% of the world's total population of the great Indian One Horned Rhinoceros can be found. It lies on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River and is one of the oldest parks of Assam. Besides rhinos, the Asiatic Water Buffalo, Elephants, Royal Bengal Tigers, Swamp deer, Barking deer and Hog deer can be seen. About 400 species of birds are found in Kaziranga National Park. To name a few- Swamp Francolin, Great Hornbill, Pallas Fish Eagle, Pied Falconets, Greater Adjutant Stork, Long Billed Vulture. There is no telling what one might find in Kaziranga but it is always a great experience. The specialty here is the Blue naped pitta among a host of Raptors and Waterfowl. The adjoining buffer areas are worth a try too, as numerous rare sightings are reported regularly.

Note : National Park in this sector remains open from 1st November to 30th April every year. However during October like previous year, we are hopeful that this coming October also the Forest Dept. will be able to keep the National Park open for Safari's in October. However, this can only be confirmed nearer to date, which Forest Dept. will declare keeping the weather and other factors in mind. Incase park is opened in October there is limited access as full access to all the ranges are normally not permitted due to weather and road condition. Alternatively 01 November to 30 April is confirmed date for opening of park. Hence suggest to plan the trip accordingly.

DAY 12 - AT KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK, ASSAM

We spend the full day exploring the beautiful forests and grasslands of the National Park with morning 01 Elephant Safari (Optional and subject to availability) followed by 01 Jeep Safari post breakfast. Post lunch enjoy another Jeep Safari. Evening visit Kaziranga Orchid Park cum Biodiversity Conservation Centre and enjoy cultural evening.



Elephant Safari: Approximately 45 mins duration 0515 hrs to 0615 hrs & 0615 hrs to 0715 hrs

Elephant safari for foreign nationals are held only on Kaziranga Range, Kohora (Central Range) Allocation of elephant riding seats and timings are regulated by the forest department, Kaziranga National Park, Government of Assam. The tickets for the same are issued only on the previous evening of the ride after 7:30 PM. subject to availability. It starts very early in the morning and continues for approx 45 minutes. It is the best way to explore the wide variety of wildlife in Kaziranga National Park. The park is covered by elephant grass which is very high and so the view from elephant back is perfect! During the course of the safari one can see herds of Indian Elephants, One-horned Rhinoceros at a very close distance. This proximity to wild animals in Kaziranga National Park makes the trip memorable and thrilling. The elephant safari takes place in the central range of the park and one gets good views of the rhino while traversing through its terrain of swamps and tall grass. It is also great for early morning photography of rhinos in the mist. There are good chances of seeing the Bengal Florican from elephant back.

Jeep Safari-

Forenoon: Entry time between 0730 to 1000 Hours. No entry after 1000 Hrs.

Afternoon: Entry time between 1330 to 1500 Hours. No entry after 1500 Hrs.

Jeep Safaris are permitted on pre-defined tourist circuits within Kaziranga National Park- currently at the following four points. Each of these circuits takes about one and half to two and half hours (or even more depending upon interest of the tourists), subject to local range conditions and weather. Jeep Safari may be cancelled / curtailed due to any reason by the Park Authorities without prior notice.

- 1. Mihimukh in Central Range at Kohora**
- 2. Bagori in Western Range at Bagori**
- 3. Agaratoli in Eastern Range at Agaratoli**
- 4. Ghorakati in Burapahar Range at Ghorakhati**

The Central Range passes through the entire habitat spectrum from ox-bow lakes, savannah woodland to swamp forests. It is very good for mammal sightings as well as for birds (Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Great Hornbill, Rufous Woodpecker). While driving along the trail, one can see rows of Indian Roofed and Tent Turtles (Kachuga tecta and Kachuga tentoria). Water Monitors Varanus salvator are sometimes spotted in the beels.

The Eastern Range abounds in water birds such as bar-headed geese, falcated duck, grey-headed lapwing and spot-billed pelican (a colony of 200 pairs of this globally threatened species nesting on the Bombax trees can be found here).

The Western Range has the highest density of rhinos as this part of the park is swampier. It has grassland birds and raptors (swamp francolin, pallas's fish eagle etc). Smooth Indian Otters (Lutrogale perspicillata) can sometimes be seen fishing in its ox-bow lakes.

The Kaziranga Orchid Park cum Biodiversity Conservation Centre is spread across 16 bighas of land. It also has a photo gallery of 500 orchids, a greenhouse, lakes with boating and angling facilities and small tree-houses, among other attractions. The basic purpose of opening this park was to conserve local varieties of orchids, flowers, fruits, fish and also to spread cultural awareness knowledge . Those visiting the park will also be able to taste juices of local fruits, pithas (local cakes) and enjoy Borgeet and Xattriya dance performances as well. Experts have been involved to give shape to the park. Khonjit Gogoi, a teacher who has been preserving orchids for the past 20 years pitched in to shape the park. As did Mahan Bora, a farmer, with his 10-year experience in collecting paddy varieties, Kunti Bora, an expert in medicinal plants, who helped in opening a medicinal plants sales counter, Bihu expert, Dhaneswar Saikia who showcases the original Bihu dance forms and music while Xattriya expert, Biplob Baruah for Xattriya dance training.

DAY 13 - KAZIRANGA- JORHAT/GUWAHATI/DIBRUGARH FLY OUT ASSAM

In time transfer to Jorhat / Guwahati/Dibrugarh airport to board flight for onward destination

Kaziranga to Jorhat airport - 90 kms /02 ½ hrs)

Kaziranga to Guwahati airport - 220 kms / 04 ½ hrs

Kaziranga to Dibrugarh airport - 220 kms / 04 ½ hrs
