

22 February to 11 March 2021

Not just a railway tour – a historic run. This recreates the Darjeeling Mail from the 1940's! We are relying on information from Bangladeshi Railways which should result in passenger service being restored to the new border crossing between Chilhati (Bangladesh) and Haldibari (India) which should be any time now.

Tour highlights

Tour Kolkata by private vintage tram, and see India's busiest station at Howrah

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway needs no introduction – our usual unrivalled programme including a three-course dinner as steam blasts its way through the forests, plus steam-hauled charters over the whole of the available length.

Ride through Bangladesh on its broad and metre gauge lines

Two days in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, including a ride on the famous “rocket boats”

A visit to the Prabatipur Diesel Works in Bangladesh, a model workshop

A visit to see the elephants at Gorumara

Cross the Indian/Bangladeshi border twice by rail, including the new Chilhati/Haldibari crossing

Please note all times are based on current timetables at June 2020, and are subject to change.

Monday 22 February 2021

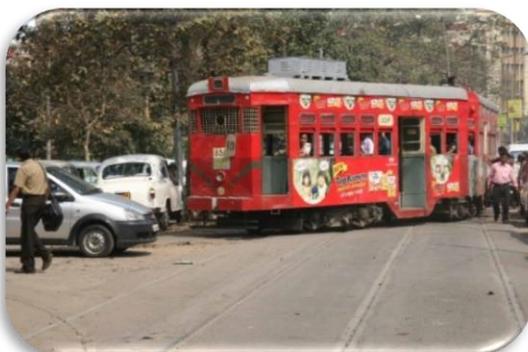
We'll check in (we can offer a choice of regional airports) for our flights to...

Tuesday 23 February 2021

....Kolkata. After clearing immigration you will meet your Tour Manager and board the coach for the transfer through the city suburbs to our hotel in the centre of Kolkata for two nights. In the afternoon, we will take a short cruise on Kolkata's River Hooghly, one of the branches of the great Ganges River.

Wednesday 24 February 2021

We will learn a bit about Kolkata with a leisurely walking tour through the City's major sights, including St John's Church, the 'Black Hole of Calcutta', The Writers Building, Howrah Bridge and a visit 'behind the scenes' at Howrah Station, Kolkata's main link with the rest of India.



Thursday 25 February 2021

In the morning we'll take a ride on one of Kolkata's remaining trams – it's an excellent way of seeing the city in relative peace whilst still being close to the action. The afternoon is free – there's plenty to do: the New Market is just behind our hotel, the Indian Museum on Chowringhee, and the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata's answer to the Taj Mahal, set in beautiful grounds on the Maidan.

Friday 26 February 2021

We'll take the 0710 international train from Kolkata up to the Bangladeshi border at Gede where we pass (probably slowly) through both Indian and Bangladeshi immigration and customs. The train then continues along the path of the 1940's Darjeeling Mail to Poradaha, where we diverge to the east to spend a couple of days in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The train is due to arrive at 1800



Saturday 27 February 2021

Today we will sample Bangladesh's major transport system of the south – the rivers. Amazingly, some of the paddle steamers built in the early 1900's still survive. They are known as 'rocket boats' for the fast (for their time) journeys between Kolkata and Dhaka. We will have a charter boat to take us down some of the waterways south of Dhaka for a few hours, with lunch served on board

Sunday 28 February 2021

Today is a rest day for those who would like it. For the more energetic, there is the whole city to explore

Monday 1 March 2021

Our train leaves Dhaka at 1000 and we return to the route of the Darjeeling mail and head north from Poradaha over the Ganges by an amazing long road and rail bridge. The track north is still semaphore signalled and (if you are brave) you might sample a curry from the kitchen car. We continue north through fertile lands, and we are due to arrive at Dinajpur at 1945 for our night's rest

Tuesday 2 March 2021

We will arrange a visit to Prabhatipur Works, where Bangladeshi Railways maintain and rebuild their diesel locomotive fleet. This is an immensely well organised and efficient works, and you will be impressed by the tidiness and cleanliness unusual in locomotive works! Outside the works, Prabhatipur is a typical north Bangladeshi town, and we can spend an hour or two seeing how the local population live – most of the economy is based around agriculture.

Wednesday 3 March 2021

Time to move on. We'll take the train for the 50 mile journey north to the new border between Chilhati and Haldibari where we will complete another set of border facilities, and then continue another 40 miles to Siliguri, the original southern terminus of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway



Thursday 4 March 2021

After breakfast we shall set off for a trip across the Teesta River and through the many tea gardens and villages to the Gorumara National park. The park is situated in the foothills of the Himalayas and is known for its population of rhinoceros and especially its elephants. After a leisurely visit to this nature reserve, we'll take a short journey north to Chalsa, and return to Siliguri in one of the line's charming local trains, sharing the journey with locals, always good entertainment

Friday 5 March 2021

You have a choice for today. If you wish, you can stay and relax in the hotel, visit the local monastery (1 km), take a tuctuc into central Siliguri's market area (5km), or join us on a half-day excursion to see the impressive lion sculptures on Coronation Bridge, and maybe continue to see the remains of the DHR's branch line to Gielle Khola as it passed through Rayeng village. This will be followed by one of our exclusive 'dining trains', with a full three course dinner served on the train as it climbs through the forest to Rangtong.

Saturday 6 March 2021

We'll start the day with a steam charter over the rarely-travelled bottom section of line, from New Jalpaiguri to Siliguri Junction. After a short break, we will continue from Siliguri Junction to Tindharia and pay a visit to the railway's workshops there, where the whole of the railway's fleet of rolling stock is maintained. As road and rail run together, a coach will accompany the train for those who wish to take photographs, and there are regular opportunities to change between coach and train.



Sunday 7 March 2021

We will have a second steam charter running between Tindharia and Darjeeling. Again, a coach will run alongside for the photographers. There will be a short break at Kurseong, where Bengal's best samosas are made. Our hotel for the next two nights is the iconic Windamere, Darjeeling's premier hotel for the last 200 years!

Monday 8 March 2021

In the morning, we'll take the 'joy train' from Darjeeling up to Ghum to visit the Railway's excellent museum, and share a cup of 'chai' with the train crew. If we're lucky with the weather, there will be stunning views of Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, and we'll have the opportunity to photograph the train with the mountain in the background. Fabulous! The rest of the day is free to explore Darjeeling – there's plenty to do. Don't miss Das Studio's albums of historic photos, fancy cakes at Glernary's, and buy some tea from Keventers to take home. There is also the Planters Club, the Mountaineering Institute, the Zoo and The Tibetan Self-Help Centre. Or just chase trains.... In the evening, the 'Railway Club', with its library of DHR items will be open, with service from the bar.

Tuesday 9 March 2021

If you can stand being up for six-thirty and the weather is kind, the view of Kanchenjunga and the Himalayas from Observation Point (200 yards from the Hotel's back door) is nothing short of stunning, and not to be missed. The rest of the morning is free for train-chasing and sightseeing. In the afternoon, the coaches will take us back down the hill to Siliguri for one night, if train services permit, we can arrange for train travel back to Siliguri Junction for those who wish, but we will need to know well in advance if you wish to take the train option.



Wednesday 10 March 2021

For our final morning, we will pay a visit to one of the many tea estates around Siliguri to see how tea is grown and turned into the tea bags that we use every day. From Bagdogra, we'll take an afternoon flight to Kolkata, where we will connect into our international flight for the journey back....

Thursday 11 March 2021

....to the UK

What's included?

Economy class flights to/from India, breakfast and dinner (*) daily, accommodation in 3-4 star hotels (or best available locally), all transport, charter trains and excursions as set out in the itinerary and the services of a Darjeeling Tours Limited Tour Manager. All tips throughout the tour (except for the Tour Manager) are included and will be dealt with on your behalf. Personal and incidental expenses are not included.

(*) Dinner is not included in Kolkata, where there is plenty of choice, both in and out of the hotel. Food is not expensive, and this allows considerable individual flexibility.

Please note that you will need a full Indian visa (not an e-visa) for this tour, plus a Bangladeshi visa-on-arrival. We will circulate full details of how this works with booking confirmations.

Bangladesh border crossing

As we have said, we expect the border crossing at Chilhati/Haldibari to be opened in good time for the tour, but we are very much in the hands of the Indian and Bangladeshi authorities. If it proves impossible to cross the border here for any reason, there is another border crossing fifty miles to the east that we will use if necessary.

The walking tour of Kolkata

This tour involves a walking tour of Kolkata, the only practical way of seeing the city's highlights, and covers about 3km (2 miles) at a reasonably gentle pace, taking around most of the day, but with opportunities for rest along the way

Guide prices

Fully inclusive price from London:	£ 3,995 based on two people sharing
Ground only price (international flights excluded)	£ 3,495
Single supplement:	£ 595



Please note that carriers, flights times and train times are subject to change.
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