

Darjeeling Mail

4 - 19 November 2024

Not just a railway tour!

A revised version of our original Darjeeling Mail tour to avoid travelling to Bangladesh.

The Indian portion of the tour remains as it is with Vintage Trams of Kolkata, visit to the Howrah Railway Museum across the Hooghly River commuting like the locals. Express train up to the foothills of Darjeeling and back, charters on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway!!

We will now traverse across to North-East India to Assam state which is lesser explored, that too by trains! A chance to get on India's premier long distance Rajdhani Express; Jungle safari in search of the One-Horned Rhinoceros. Photography opportunities will be at its' best in unexplored north-east India!

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.
- Ride on India's premier long distance Rajdhani Express to North-Eastern state over the mighty Brahmaputra River.
- Exclusive Jeep Safari in search of the Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros.
- Sightseeing highlights: Kolkata's Victoria Memorial, Darjeeling Tea Gardens, the Himalayas at Darjeeling, bustling Guwahati downtown, not to mention all the colourful bazaars.

Please note all times are based on current timetables at September 2024 and are subject to change.



Monday 4 November 2024

We'll check in mid-day flight at London Heathrow (*please refer to other airport options below*) for our overnight flight connection via middle-east / direct to Delhi for....

Tuesday 5 November 2024

...Kolkata where we are due to arrive in the morning, and 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. (B)

We will have the day at leisure with a conducted walk with your tour manager in the city centre.

Wednesday 6 November 2024

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.

Followed by an exciting, guided walking tour of Kolkata through the City's major sights, including **St John's Church**, the '**Black Hole of Calcutta**', **The Writers Building**, **G.P.O.**, the famous **Howrah Bridge** and **Howrah station**.



Just down the road is Kolkata's wonderful **Railway Museum**, well worth a visit (B).



We will take a short **cruise on Kolkata's River Hooghly**, one of the branches of the great Ganges River. (B)

Thursday 7 November 2024

Early morning transfer to Howrah railway station to board the newest **Vande Bharat Express** at 0555 hrs to arrive at New Jalpaiguri (NJP) at 1325 hrs. A popular semi-high-speed train service being launched across country with a target of 75 such trains marking 75 years of India's independence! Designed & developed by Integral Coach Factory India (ICF) in Chennai & offering the best hospitality and comfort with food served on board. A truly Indian experience in comfort!

Our coach will meet you at New Jalpaiguri railway station and transfer our hotel in Siliguri, where we stay for two nights and from where the Indian arm of the Darjeeling Railway Society is run. By early evening ready for an exciting **Steam dining charter** from Siliguri to Sukna/Rangtong and back (B,D)

Friday 8 November 2024

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We'll start the day with a steam charter over **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. We'll then return by road to our hotel in Siliguri for the night (B,D).



We will have the option of riding from New Jalpaiguri, bottom of the section to Siliguri (*subject to operating schedule & railway permissions*) but on a regular diesel hauled service train and then connect on to our steam charter waiting for us....

Saturday 9 November 2024

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 we can enjoy the station cafeteria for a proper cup of chai (or coffee) and a sandwich.



We then, continue our chartered steam hauled ride to Darjeeling. Don't miss the famous photo shots of the train making it's way out of the narrow **Kurseong Bazaar**. Our hotel for the next three nights is the iconic **Windamere**,

Darjeeling's premier hotel for the last 200 years! (B,D)

Sunday 10 November 2024

We'll have a relaxed guided tour of Darjeeling to visit the popular **Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI)**, which houses the memorabilia of the local legendary Sherpa Tenzing Norgay who along with his Kiwi partner Sir Edmund Hillary Mt Everest in 1953. Further visit the adjoining **Zoo** to witness some the rarest Leopards such as clouded and snow leopards amongst The Royal Bengal Tiger, Red Panda & Sloth Bear!



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Gently stroll back on **The Darjeeling Mall Road** through to Observatory Hill for your hotel. There is also the Planters Club, Das Studio's albums of historic photos, fancy cakes at Glenary's, and buy some tea from Keventers to take home.

In the evening, the 'Railway Club', with its library of DHR items will be open, with service from the bar (B,D)

Monday 11 November 2024

We'll have a photographer's delight this morning chasing the **Joy ride** from Darjeeling up to Ghum in our vehicles. Whilst in Ghum, 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 on the **Batasia**

Loop. Fabulous!

By noon, we will also aim at visiting a local **Tea Estate** where you will be shown the process that takes place to produce the tea that we drink. Subject to weather!

Enjoy time in your lovely hotel terrace overlooking the mountains and the valley (B,D).



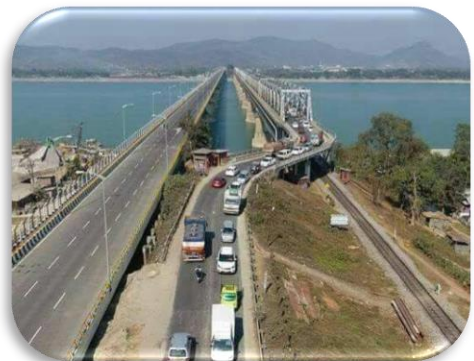
Tuesday 12 November 2024

We will start our journey of the southbound **Darjeeling Mail** with the 0900 departure from Darjeeling, due into New Jalpaiguri at 1615. We'll spend the night in Siliguri (B,D).

Wednesday 13 November 2024

After a relaxed breakfast, we will transfer to New Jalpaiguri station to board 20504 DBRG **Rajdhani Express** at 1135 hrs to arrive in **Guwahati** at 1825 hrs in Assam state. One of the Seven Sister States of North-Eastern India. Known for its stunning natural landscapes, including the Brahmaputra River and lush tea gardens.

Rajdhani trains are long distance overnight premier express services connecting Capital of India, Delhi with the capital of each state of India. A traditionally renowned and prestigious train of India! We cross the mighty Brahmaputra on the '**Saraighat Bridge**' (1492 metres rail cum road bridge) on the Rangiya Jn. – Guwahati section.



On arrival, we will be transferred to our hotel in Guwahati, the largest city of Assam, and also the largest metropolis in northeastern India. Dinner in hotel. (B,D)

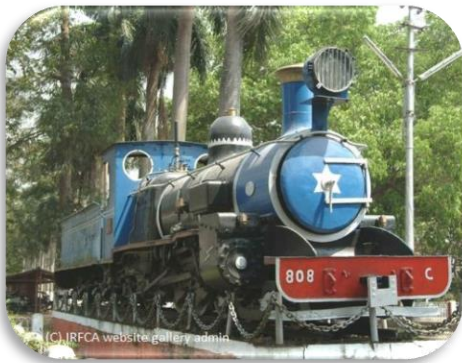
Thursday 14 November 2024

Breakfast at hotel. We then meet our appointed guide for a visit the famous **Kamakhya Temple**. A Hindu temple dedicated to goddess Kamakhya dating back to 8th - 9th century with many subsequent rebuilding. It is one of the most sacred and oldest 'shakti pithas', the seat of Shakti, a significant shrine and pilgrimage in Hinduism. This temple is the centrepiece of widely practiced, powerful 'Tantrik Shaktism' cult in India.



Further, visit Guwahati Railway station on the

Pan Bazaar side to photograph the YG 4119 on plinth. Not to miss the Café Golden Feast carriage right opposite the station for a well-deserved refreshment break.



We then carry on visiting **Maligaon**, the headquarters of **Northeast Frontier Railway** (NFR). Photograph the C-class plinthed and then a exclusive interaction with one of the senior NFR official over tea! (B,D)

Friday 15 November 2024

We enjoy a guided walk through the main bazaar. Also, visit the Guwahati Railway station on the Panbazaar side to photograph the plinthed YG 4119 also known as 'North East Queen'.

This evening we have planned a Brahmaputra Cruise for you offering the perfect insight to the city's vibe! (B,D)



Saturday 16 November 2024

After breakfast, we travel through the mesmerizing countryside to enjoy a Jungle safari in **Pobitra Wildlife Sanctuary** in search of the one-horned Rhinoceros. Spread over 38 km² in the flood plains of Brhmaputra river. It is known for holding the highest density of Greater One Horned Rhinoceros in the country. The Sanctuary consists of the Rajamayong Reserve Forest and Pobitora Reserve

Forest. The Rajamayong hills harbor several species including Leopard, Capped Langur, Porcupine, Pangolin, etc.

The Grasslands of Pobitora offer sightings of the Greater One Horned Rhinoceros, Wild Water Buffalo, Monitor Lizard, Wild Boar, etc. Also, over 375 species of birds are seen here making it a birder's paradise. Pobitora also holds the distinction of being the source population of the Indian Rhinoceros Vision, 2020 (IRV). (B,D).

Sunday 17 November 2024

Late morning, departure transfer to Guwahati airport for a short 1.5 hrs mid day flight to Kolkata. On arrival in Kolkata, we will be transferred to our hotel. Late afternoon, free at leisure. (B).

Monday 18 November 2024

0800 hrs, we will visit the famous **Flower Market** under the Howrah Bridge. Worth a visit!

The Victoria Memorial lawns, Kolkata's answer to the Taj Mahal, set in beautiful grounds on the Maidan.

Return to hotel for wash & change before we transfer to Kolkata international airport terminal for your return flight to UK.... (B).



Tuesday 19 November 2024

....Arrive UK in the morning.

What's included?

- Economy class flights to/from India in fully inclusive price.
- Accommodation in 4-5-star hotels.
- Buffet breakfast and dinner daily except in Kolkata where you have plenty of options (*).
- All transport by deluxe vehicles with experienced drivers.
- Charter & regular trains and excursions as set out in the itinerary.
- Services of a Darjeeling Tours Limited Tour Manager.
- Jeep safari in Pobitra Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam with entrance fees.
- 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.
- Optionals not Included as may be suggested or mentioned in the programme above.

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(*) 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. On a daily basis, meals provided are shown with the following key: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner.

The tour

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 three hours.

Prices

Per Person on twin/double sharing basis.

Fully inclusive price from London:	£ 4,790
Ground only price (international flights excluded):	£ 3,995
Single supplement:	£ 615

Flights

If you would prefer to travel to India from a regional UK airport, we will do our best to find you something suitable. It usually works well from Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh, and can sometimes work from other airports too.

Please let us know if you require a Premium Economy or Business and we will be happy to quote the supplement.



Please note that all carriers, train times and flight times are subject to change at any time.