

# Sikkim - Darjeeling Tour

Duration: 27 April 2024 - 4 May 2024 (Five nights hotel stay)

**Total Cost:** 25-26k taka (including around INR 13k) without shopping

I have never been involved in planning a tour, this was my first time and having the memory of a fish, the details are already fading away. So a small attempt to remember it, and hopefully it will help others.

## Visa application and Port:

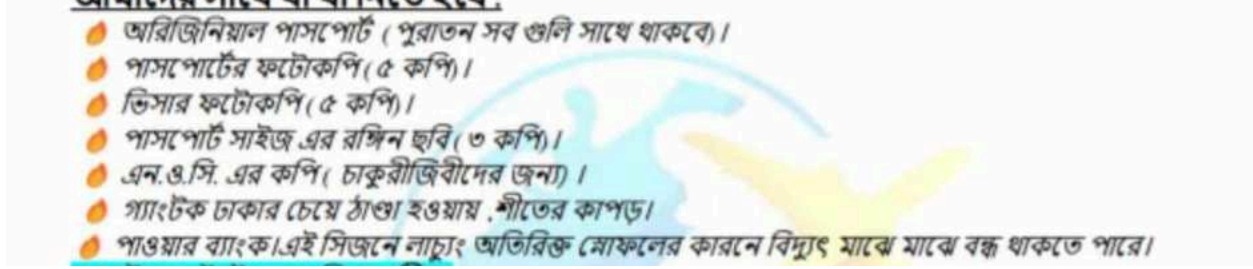
We applied for Indian visa months ago, around 15 people or more (half of them finally didn't go with us, it is tough to sync vacations in adulthood 😊). For the port, we selected Changrabandha so that we can go by bus. However if you select NJP, you can go via direct train, Mitali Express (Cost 2100 sth). We didn't choose that because the train is only available on Sunday and Wednesday. We were not sure if we could have synced leaves from different workplaces for that. Later Ammu told me that we could have selected Banglabandha port (which is in Panchagarh) and it would have been easier for us to reach Shiliguri since Shiliguri is 10-15 minutes away from there. And a direct train (Panchagarh Express) can get us in Panchagarh easily. Don't know much details on that. Applying for an Indian Visa requires 800 taka. Also, NEVER forget to upload your photo while applying online, it is not optional.

## Preparations:

At first, we managed 7 bus tickets by Shyamoli N/R Travels from Dhaka to Shiliguri (cost: 2200 taka). For the return journey, we couldn't manage N/R tickets so we bought Shyamoli Paribohon (SP) which cost almost similar (since it is bought from Shiliguri, the ticket price may vary depending on rupee to taka conversion rate). However, it is a bit difficult to buy SP tickets from Dhaka, the people from SP are not that co-operative since the tickets are managed from Shiliguri, and they can't do much from here.

Also for our first night, we booked our hotel from Dhaka. Seeing pics from onlines and booking.com, we called on the wapp number directly and compared rates and saw pics of rooms (Always judge a hotel by the pics of its washroom). Our hotel was [Le Primula](#) (it was good but mind you, you would need to take around 50 stairs to reach MG Marg if you walk). We took one family room accommodating 4 people (INR 3000 per night) and one room with triple bed (INR 2500 per night).

And these were the things we took with us (must take foolproof winter clothes for Zero Point):



## Day 0-1: Reaching Gangtok

Started from Kollyanpur Shyamoli NR counter from 7:45 pm. Reached Burimari at 5am. There was a separate room for girls in the counter with beds where we four girls slept shamelessly keeping the guys outside standing for around 3 hours :) Then at 8, we woke up and the guys called us to have breakfast. Had porota, egg and veg in a restaurant nearby (total cost was 170 taka only for seven people). Finally at 9am the immigration office opens, so we went for immigration. Shyamoli took care of almost everything in the immigration office. Submitted my GO (for others, it was NOC) in the BD Immigration Office. Shyamoli took 1150 taka from us for paying the travel tax and in additional 300 taka from each for different steps in immigration. Finally we got on the bus of Shyamoli in the Indian side which dropped us off at Shiliguri on around 1pm. To be noted, we exchanged dollars and taka to rupees at the border and bought 3 sims from the Shyamoli helper, each worth 500 rupees. Our sims had unlimited calls and 1.5 GB for 4G and unlimited data for 5G.



Thinking that we don't have enough time for lunch, we bought snacks in Shiliguri, went to SNT Taxi Stand and started looking for a car to go to Gangtok. Bad luck for us, it was the peak season and we couldn't find any empty ones. Finally we managed a car with another family but the car came after two hours. The car had AC so it took INR 7000 to reserve it for ten people. Sadly the AC never came to any use since the natural wind felt better. Took seals from Rangpo post on the way which needed to be done by 7pm, but since our driver had(?) connections, we got it done at 7:30 pm.

We reached Gangtok at around 9pm when everything was closing down. Sadly our plan for the first night went in ruins and we somehow managed to get dinner at a restaurant in MG Marg. However, MG Marg is too festive, there was live music playing in almost all restaurants. Turns out, live music are a thing on their weekends and it was a Sunday that night. Ate at OSM cafe, good food and a bit posh restaurant.



## Day 2: On our way to Lachung



Started for North Sikkim(Lachung) at around 11am from the Vajra Taxi Stand. We took a package worth INR 18k for 7 people and a car. It was considerably cheap since we heard before that it cost 3k per people so 21k was expected. However in peak season like this, people actually demanded more (24/27k) from us, so we secured a good deal. How we did it, that's a very shady story and I'll skip it. Also, many advised us to book the car at least 24 hours before since at last moment, cars were not that much available. However, our driver for the package, Philip da, was too good and decent and he is one of the main reasons we enjoyed Lachung so much. On our way, we made stops for a viewpoint, seven sister falls, a random bridge and food and toilet breaks occasionally. Not to mention the occasional traffic jam on the hills. There were two checkpoints while going to Lachung which were managed by our guide. Reached our hotel in Lachung at around 9pm that night. It was freezing cold. I took a bath in that weather anyway, had a long journey of around 10 hours. Had dinner, coffee, some chitchats then went to sleep since we needed to wake up at 6am tomorrow.

## Day 3: All about North Sikkim



The roads from Lachung to Zero Point were mesmerizing. Flowers, rocks, trees and behind them snowy mountains spiked. Worth every money. The driver took INR 3500 for taking us to Zero point (it would have been doable with INR 3000 too, but since we had good terms with Philip da, didn't want to argue). We also rented shoes worth of 100 rupees from our hotel for walking in Zero Point, though I believe our shoes would have been fine. Half of us lost our "snow virginity" in Zero Point XD. On our way back, we made two stops, at yumthang valley and at a random spot in front of flower trees. Then we had our lunch back at our hotel in Lachung and at around 2pm started our journey to Gangtok.



On our way back, we made a stop at Amitabh Bacchan Falls, such a majestic falls. Had dinner on the way. Finally reached Gangtok at 11pm when everything was already closed. Hence, another of our gangtok exploration nights was ruined. Finally decided that we should stay

another day at Gangtok at least to explore the city. So here goes the next day, the least hectic one.

## Day 4: Sightseeing at Gangtok



Had breakfast at a restaurant in M.G. Marg. Then started gangtok sightseeing from around 11am. Took two cabs to ropeway (each INR 200, total waste, could have walked easily :3 ). After the ropeway, we decided to explore the other places by walking. The city is small, the main issue is the slope. A 2 minutes distance can be a vertical 2 minutes distance which is very tiring. However, visited the National Institute of Tibetology museum and Do Drul Chorten by walking. Took a small break for drinking tea at a restaurant. Took the fancy Tibetan Tea which tasted so shit that we ordered a vanilla shake to remove the aftertaste.

Afterwards, took a cab to Handicraft exhibition center, wore traditional dresses there (INR 100 pp). Then walked to the flower exhibition center nearby, bought some flowers for BD friends. Then we walked back to MG Marg and had our late lunch at Taste in Tibet. I found it a bit overhyped to be honest. Did some souvenir shopping and went back to the hotel to get ready for our fancy restaurant dinner plan. Went to Lazy Chef after getting decked up, tbh it was not that fancy, and the amount of wait time (1.5 hours) ruined our next plan for the night of visiting a karaoke club :)

## Day 5: A peak of Darjeeling

The day I was pissed most of the time 😊



Started our journey for Darjeeling on a rented jeep worth INR 4.3k (INR 3.5k would have been ideal). Worst driver(named Supan) of the trip. Misbehaved with all of us and was driving too fast and dangerously on the zigzag roads just because he had another group of customers to pick up in Darjeeling at 12pm. He also intentionally dropped us off at a taxi stand faraway from our hotel, just to pick his customers from there. We had to hire a taxi worth INR 500 just to get us near Mall Road, where our hotel was.

Now coming to the hotel, me and Sadia watched a few youtube videos regarding roaming Darjeeling and in one of the videos, one couple stayed at Hotel Anugrah which had a very reasonable price and they praised that hotel and the staff. In a hurry, I fixed that hotel the day before just because it was pretty cheaper than the others (per night INR 1400 per double room). Going to the hotel, my mood got instantly ruined. There was no window view, a wall was on the other side, the rooms were small and without sufficient lighting and very old furniture. To be honest, it was the worst hotel we have stayed this far in any trip and the fact that we could have easily afforded better hotels was eating me alive. However, a better suggestion for a hotel would be Hotel Golden Docma (INR 2000 per night).

We decided to spend the whole time outside just to avoid staying in that hotel for long. Went to Nightingale park nearby by walking. Spent some time there then walked to Happy Valley tea estate. A bit of a suggestion: don't go there without a reserved car. You can easily walk downwards to reach the tea estate but going upwards is impossible unless you are a crazy trekker. And even if you are, the trekking won't provide you with any good views so it's not worth it. We had a plan to complete the mixed points for the half day but on Thursday some spots were closed so we could only visit these two places.



Returned to Mall Road and ate in Glenary's bakery, the only good thing about Darjeeling. Great Shepherd's Pie, we took photos in nC2 for the first time the whole trip. Then spent the rest of the night shopping for friends and families in Mall Road. There is nothing good to buy in Darjeeling except tea tbh, I wish I knew it earlier so would not have wasted the first hour buying random shawls and clothes. Had a plan to eat at a food chain that night but when we were done with shopping, many restaurants were full of customers so went to Mughal biriyani ghor and had biryani/ kebab for dinner. While returning, the roads were almost empty as it was around 10pm. We bought chocolates, sat in the middle of Mall Road and reminisced about how this is our last trip together. I got a bit sad tbh, Darjeeling was bad but that moment was very soothing. Standing there with the people I have gone on tours multiple times, I developed a comfort zone with them: sharing rooms, dresses, having late night gossip or even taking washroom breaks together. Now I knew whom to go to look for handwash or hairdryer or medicine (well all to Purba), and they know how Mashiat makes a big fuss each night for taking a long shower. Too many small beautiful details might not be useful anymore to any of us (well I plan to bug Sadia in Michigan the same way, otherwise going on all tours together for so many years will be a total waste of knowledge).

Returned to the hotel after a bit, took a shower in that somehow functioning washroom. Went to the boys room and talked about each of our future plans while Purba, as always slept the whole time sitting straight. Finally at 2am, we concluded our last trip night.



## Day 6: Adios



At 8am, we started for Shiliguri in a jeep (INR 3.5k, though INR 2.5k would have been right). Driver was good. Reached the counter of Shyamoli Paribahan at 11:45am. Just kept the bag on the counter and ran to Shree Leathers in two Totos. As efficient as we always are, finished shopping within half an hour in spite of buying a lot of things. Myself: two shoes for BD men, a moneybag and a leather bag for Ammu. Then at 12:30pm, we left Shree Leathers, and went to burger king for lunch. By 1:25 pm, started for the bus counter and by 1:50, we reached our bus which would start at 2 pm, just 10 min before. Efficient, ain't we? Finally, long story short, reached Dhaka the next day at 6am and there it concluded my last UG friends' trip (last or not, surely the last one when all of us will be bachelors :3 )

### Contacts:

Philip Da (Lachung Driver): +91 89670 27654

### Hotel:

Hotel Le Primula (Gangtok): 917478184148 (Sajan, Hotel Manager, good guy, can ask for driver contacts)