Come explore the spectacular landscapes and flora of Sikkim and the Darjeeling Himalayas!

See tea plantations around Darjeeling—of British hill station fame—in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Ride the World Heritage famed “Darjeeling Himalayan Railroad.”

Visit botanic gardens and orchids gardens, then head to Sikkim which is filled with Old World charm. Learn about the art and heritage of the Tibetan culture of Sikkim.

Then drive toward the higher Himalayas through narrow valleys and winding mountain roads, where waterfalls leap into deep gorges, en route to Lachung. This will be our base to explore two spectacular natural areas, the Yumthang “Valley of the Flowers” and the Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary which blooms during April and May. Our route is within sight of Kanchenjunga, at 28,169 feet, the 3rd highest peak in the world.

Come join us as we discover the foothills and mountains of Himalayan India with our excellent local guide Alister Adhikari.
Days 1/2 — Newark to Delhi
Depart from Newark for our evening flight on United Airlines to Delhi. Arrive Delhi in the evening of Day 2; transfer to Ashok Country Resort.

Day 3 — Delhi, Bagdogra, Darjeeling
90km/3hrs/7004 ft.
Fly from Delhi to Bagdogra, and transfer to Darjeeling, the renowned hill town of the British colonial era. Amidst rolling tea gardens and crowned by the majestic Himalayas, Darjeeling is fondly called the “Queen of the Hills.” This is the land of the muscatel-flavored Darjeeling tea recognized across the globe, and home of the world heritage Darjeeling Himalayan Railway where the century old miniature steam engine still chugs uphill. En route, we will visit Makaibari tea factory which is one of the leading Tea Estates in the region which produces organic tea. Elgin Hotel, Darjeeling (2 nights). B,L,D

Day 4 — Darjeeling, World Heritage Railway & Lloyds Botanical Garden
After breakfast, enjoy a ride on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway which was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 1999. The joy ride will take you from Darjeeling to the high Ghoom station and back to Darjeeling with a stop at Batasia loop and the Ghoom Railway museum. After lunch, visit Lloyds Botanical Garden. Here many alpine and sub-alpine plants grow under conditions similar to their natural habitats in the Darjeeling Himalayan hill region. The garden has a section for medicinal plants which are native to the area. More than 60 orchids representing various terrestrial and epiphytic species primarily from Singalila National Park are found in the Orchid House. In the evening, we will explore the little hill station’s traditions and culture. B,L,D

Day 5 — Darjeeling, Gangtok. 120km/4hrs/5500 ft.
After breakfast, you will transfer to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, which means the ‘town on the hilltop’ in the local Bhutia language. Sikkim is one of the smallest states in India and is also known as the most peaceful. Gangtok combines an attractive mix of Old World charm, traditional hospitality and a modern cosmopolitan outlook. En route, we will visit Takdah (a small village) that has a Government Orchid growing centre mainly for Cymbidiums. The guardian mountain Kanchenjunga rises to 8,585 meters (28,169 feet) above Sikkim, and is the third highest mountain in the world. It was first explored by the British botanist Joseph D. Hooker, Director of Kew Gardens, who visited in 1848 and 1849. The Hidden Forest Retreat, Gangtok (2 nights). B,L,D

Day 6 — Saramsa Botanical Garden
This morning, we’ll visit the Saramsa Botanical Garden, 14 km from Gangtok, also known as Ipecac Garden. This garden was initially established in 1922 to grow fruits like pineapple, guava, oranges, and lychee for the British officers. “Chini Champa,” the local variety of banana, was popular at that time. In 1940 the Forestry Department introduced the growing of Ipecac from Malaysia for medicine. The Ipecac Garden is still famous today and preserves several orchids, as well as tropical and temperate plants and other blooms in its treasure chest of floral wealth.

We will also visit the Institute of Tibetology, the Handicraft Center, and the local market. The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology which was established in 1958, sponsors and promotes research on the religion, history, language, art and culture of the people of the Tibetan culture which includes Sikkim. It holds one of the largest collections of Tibetan works in the world.

The Handicraft center was founded during the reign of the Chogyals of Sikkim to preserve and propagate the art and craft skills of the local artisans. Here, you can see handwoven carpets with traditional motifs, blankets, shawls, ‘thangka’ paintings, graceful “Choktse” (hand carved foldable tables), hand-painted masks, dolls and many other objects. B,L,D

Day 7 — Gangtok & Lachung. 121km/6hrs/9500 ft.
The journey from Gangtok to Lachung will take about 5 to 6 hours traveling through remote areas with narrow valleys and numerous waterfalls plunging into deep gorges. During the drive, due to the altitude variation, you will witness warm sub tropical forests, temperate deciduous forests, and alpine zones in the higher ridges.

Lachung, a small hamlet at an elevation of about 9,600 ft (3,000 m) provides the base for exploring Yumthang, the valley of flowers which is situated at an altitude of 11,800 ft (3,564 m). It is a paradise for nature lovers and botanists with a fascinating blend of flora and fauna and a picturesque landscape. Yarlam Hotel, Lachung (3 nights). B,L,D

Day 8 — Lachung & Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary
After an early morning breakfast, we’ll visit Yumthang (25 km/1 hr), a valley at an altitude of 11,800 ft through
which Lachung Chu flows. The region is within the Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary which is fully covered with Rhododendron with more than 36 species, including *B. mekangense*, which bloom during the months of April to May.

We will also botanize and explore the lower regions of the valley where you can expect to find many interesting species of plant life such as: *Meconopsis grandis*, the national flower of Bhutan. Legendary mountaineer George Leigh Mallory discovered it in 1922 on his first attempt to scale the un conquered Mount Everest. Also see other members of *Meconopsis*, and *Gentiana depressa*, *Fritillaria*, *Primula*, orchids, and the Himalayan mandrake. Growing under Magnolias look for Lloydia, the lily *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, *Trillium*, and the ever-changing diversity of orchids. B,L,D

**Days 9/10 — Lachung & Yumesamdong /15,000 ft.**

Today we will enjoy an excursion to Yumesamdong, which is situated at an altitude of 15,000 ft. A valley grazed by yaks and their nomadic shepherds, it is rugged, breathtaking and one can stop for a hot water spring bath just below the snow clad peaks, which is renowned for its medical properties. Look for colorful lichens, grasses, and hearty plants in the vegetative stage.

On Day 10, we’ll return from the high country to Gangtok (125km/6hrs). *Hidden Forest Retreat, Gangtok.* B,L,D

**Day 11 — Gangtok & Kalimpong.**

**75km/2.5hrs/4163ft.**

After breakfast, we will visit the famous Rumtek Monastery which is the World Dharma Chakra Centre and the seat of His Holiness, the Gyalwa Karmapa, who is the head of the Kagyupa order of Tibetan Buddhism. Then transfer to Kalimpong. We will drive along roads less traveled, passing through countryside and terraced land, botanizing along the way. This evening, explore the little hill station’s traditions and culture as you walk through the town. *The Himalayan Hotel (3 nights).* B,L,D

**Day 12 — Kalimpong.**

After breakfast, we will have an excursion through virgin forests to Lava and Loleygaon. There you can spot different orchid species growing naturally. The area is also the natural habitat for *Rhododendron dalhousie* and there is a small arboretum and garden. B,L,D

**Day 13 — Kalimpong.**

After breakfast, we will explore Kalimpong including a visit to a Handmade Paper Factory which produces handmade paper from the bark of a native tree, *Edgeworthia gardneri*. After lunch, visit orchid nurseries and see the various orchids in bloom while interacting with the plantmen. We could visit the beginnings of the Himalayan Institute of Natural History Art being started by Hemlata Pradhan (www.botanicalart.in) who specializes in painting Indian orchids. B,L,D

**Days 14/15 — Kalimpong, Bagdogra (76km/3hrs), & Delhi**

Drive to Bagdogra Airport for our return flights to Delhi and home. B,L
**May HIMALAYAS!**

**Discover Landscapes & Flora of the Sikkim & Darjeeling**

**HIMALAYAS!**

May 8-22, 2016

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**COSTS & CONDITIONS**

**Trip Fee:** $3,995 per person. Air fare is $1,695 from Newark to Delhi, round trip, plus in-tour flights Delhi/Bagdogra, RT, of approximately $395 per person.

**Questions:** Please call Betchart Expeditions Inc.

- **Telephone:** (800) 252 4910 or (408) 252 4910
- **Fax:** (408) 252 1444
- **Email:** Taunya@betchartexpeditions.com

**Expedition Fee Includes:** Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; all meals in Darjeeling and Sikkim; breakfast in Delhi; tips to drivers; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

**Expedition Fee Does Not Include:** International air fare and in-tour air fare (quoted separately); dinner in Delhi; visa fees; gratuities to expedition leaders; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, sodas, snacks, personal insurance; or foreign airport departure taxes.

**What to Expect:** This expedition is for travel enthusiasts with a special interest in plants and the natural and cultural heritage of Darjeeling and Sikkim. Visit botanic gardens and wild natural areas, and drive in SUVs into the rugged high country of Sikkim to discover the spring flora in bloom.

The trip will be a wonderful experience for plant enthusiasts, who can tolerate winding mountain roads to reach superb natural areas in fantastic landscapes of the Himalayas, including a chance to see the third highest peak in the world. The group will travel up to 6 or 8 hours on two days. Walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery. It will be spring, when the weather is finest and during rhododendron bloom. Some rain can be expected.

The expedition will be a tremendous experience for hardy travelers with an appetite for adventure. (No smoking in vehicles or meals please.)

**Air Fare & Airline Ticketing:** Group flights are reserved with United Airlines from Newark to Delhi, round trip, with in-tour flights to Bagdogra, round trip. To ensure that all travelers get the group rate (which requires 10 or more traveling together, round trip), we ask that all group members depart together from Newark. All air bookings will be coordinated by Taunya@betchartexpeditions.com.

**Accommodations:** Are twin-share with private bath, comfortable, and among the best available in the locations. Expect a good bed, showers, Western toilets, and carefully prepared food. If you want a single, or do not have a roommate, the single supplement is $795. Singles are not available at the Yarlam Hotel.

**Reservations, Deposits, & Payments:** Please mail a deposit of $500 per person with the completed reservation form to:

- **Sikkim Himalayas 2016**
  - **Betchart Expeditions Inc.**
  - **17050 Montebello Road**
  - **Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**

The balance is due 60 days before departure.

**Cancellations & Refunds:** The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of $100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the $100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.

**Responsibility:** Betchart Expeditions Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, the American Chemical Society (ACS), and The Planetary Society act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels, and exercise every care possible. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or reserve the right to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner’s risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.

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