



# Himalayan Kingdoms

## Himalayan Kingdoms

24 days

Fully Inclusive from the UK

The journey of a lifetime through Sikkim and Bhutan – encounter breathtaking landscapes, colourful heritage and dramatic, hillside monasteries.

### Fully Inclusive price includes:

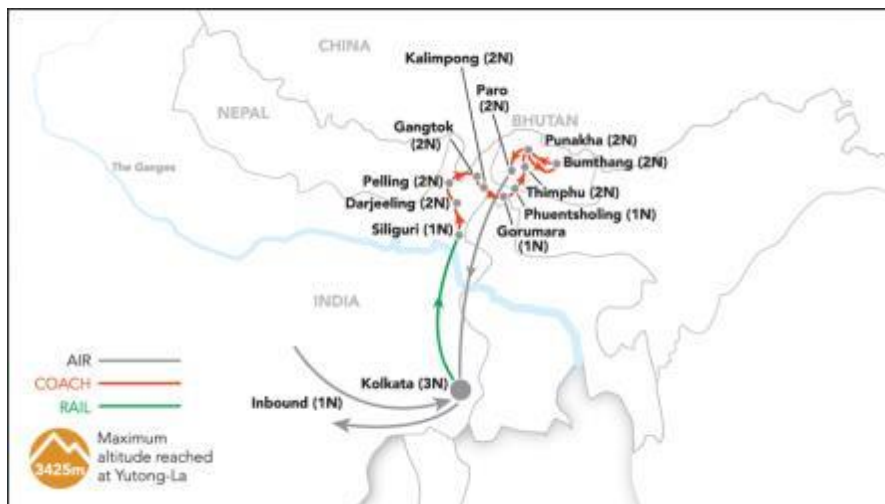
- International flights and current taxes
- Domestic transportation
- Accommodation
- All meals (excluding drinks) included
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- Visa fees for UK & EU passport holders

## Your Tour Dossier

This document is designed to be read in conjunction with the other pre-departure information provided by Wendy Wu Tours including the tour itinerary as described in our brochure and/or website. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour.

If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation; they will be explained here.

All passengers must read this document to ensure the itinerary is suitable for their interests and physical capabilities. This is not your final itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.



## Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

India and Bhutan continue to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to one country in Asia with us, then another, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own.

A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a local market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in India and Bhutan requires patience as potential delays are to be expected due to standards of service. There is a low level of English spoken throughout India and Bhutan, so your local guides or National Escort will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things do not always go to plan, are those who find their experience most rewarding. It is essential that all passengers recognise the demands of factors such as basic facilities and cultural differences they may encounter in some areas.

## Himalayan Kingdoms – Active Paced Tour

Refers to programmes where long periods of sightseeing on foot, climbing of stairs and in/out of boats and physical involvement is necessary. These tours are generally longer in duration and could involve long days of driving or overnight train journeys. Some programmes may also include easy hiking or a home stay. These tours may travel to remote areas and areas of high altitude, reaching up to 5,000m. Accommodation on these tours may be in basic hotels or camps. These programmes require a good level of fitness and mobility.

*NB: Please note that times and distances listed in the tour dossier are approximate.*

### Day 1: Fly to Kolkata

Fly overnight to Kolkata

### Day 2: Arrive Kolkata

You will be met at the Kolkata International Airport in the Arrivals Hall tonight by your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with any other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer (45 minutes to 1 hour drive) to your hotel and check-in.

### Day 3: Kolkata

After having the morning at leisure, you will have a half day sightseeing tour around Kolkata, involving approx. 3 hours on foot. Sightseeing includes a visit to a Jain temple – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below.

Visit the Kalighat Temple. Please note that many foreigners find the temple confronting as they still make live animal sacrifices here (usually at midday) and can be crowded and pushy. To create the image of blood running on the ground, for example, they grind hibiscus flowers with water to run deep red. Goats are ritually sacrificed each day to honour the goddess Kali, known for her destructiveness.

***NB: There is an obligatory donation of at least INR 50 (GBP 50p) each person at the temple. This is not included in your tour cost.***

### Day 4: Kolkata to New Jalpaiguri

Rise early for a morning tour to a local flower market, drive past Howrah Bridge, tour Dalhousie Square, the Secretariat Building and the Old Court House Street. Sightseeing today involves around 2-3 hours on foot.

Later in the afternoon board your day train to New Jalpaiguri. The train will depart at 1415 from Howrah Junction Railways Station in Kolkata and reach New Jalpaiguri Railway Station at 2210 (8hrs train journey). Upon arrival in New Jalpaiguri you will transfer to your Siliguri hotel for one night stay.

***N.B: As our train is a day train, our seats will be in an AC Chair Car. More than likely you will not be able to purchase any food or drink on the train, so if you need snacks make sure to pre-purchase them before boarding. The train carriages are shared, so at all times please be aware of your belongings.***

### Day 5: Siliguri to Darjeeling

Darjeeling altitude – 2,045m

Drive 90km (approx. 3-4 hours) to Darjeeling. Upon arrival, check into your hotel and enjoy the rest of the afternoon at your leisure.

***NB: Electricity shortages are common in Darjeeling.***

## Day 6: Darjeeling

Ghoom altitude – 2,258m

Rise before dawn to catch a jeep or **sumo bus** to Tiger Hill, 15km outside of town. Sightseeing here involves walking from wherever the vehicle parks to the top of the lookout. After viewing the sunrise from the lookout, there is easy sightseeing at a monastery near Ghoom before returning to the hotel. After breakfast, the group coach will take you to Darjeeling station to enjoy a ride on the **'Toy Train'** around the hillside (approx. 1 hour).

Drive back to the hotel in the group coach for lunch, or you may have the option to catch the train back to Darjeeling as well. Visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute spending 1-2 hours at the site. You will visit a tea plantation today where there will be walking over uneven surfaces.

## Day 7: Darjeeling to Pelling

Pelling altitude – 2,150m

Drive approx. 6-7 hours (136km) to Pelling, visiting Tashiding and Pemayangtse Monasteries en route. Sightseeing is easy here, with few steps – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below. Check into the hotel for the monastery visits.

## Day 8: Pelling-Khecheopalri Lake

Pelling altitude – 2,150m

Drive approx. 1.5 hours (18km) to Kanchenjunga Falls then Khecheopalri Lake; the road is uneven and unsealed. Sightseeing here is leisurely. Return to Pelling for lunch. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure. Today you will travel in jeep or **sumo bus** for your sightseeing.

## Day 9: Pelling to Gangtok

Gangtok altitude – 1,677m

Drive approx. 6-7 hours (130km) to Gangtok visiting Tashiding Monastery en route. On arrival, check into the hotel.

## Day 10: Gangtok

Gangtok altitude – 1,677m

This morning there is easy sightseeing within Gangtok, which includes visiting Enchey Monastery – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below. Visit Sikkim Research Institute of Technology, Do Drul Chorten and Tibetan pagoda before you return the hotel.

## Days 11-12: Gangtok to Kalimpong

Kalimpong – 1,250m

Check-out from the hotel and drive approx. 1.5 hours (25km) to Rumtek Monastery for easy sightseeing. Continue driving 3 hours (80km) to Kalimpong. The next day is at your leisure.

## Day 13: Kalimpong to Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary

Gorumara – 1,625m

Drive approx. 4 hours (97km) to the Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary and check into the hotel. The afternoon sanctuary programme includes a jeep safari for approx. 2 hours.

## Day 14: Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary to Phuentsholing

Phuentsholing altitude – 300m

Drive approx. 2.5 hours (84km) to Phuentsholing, the gateway to Bhutan for overland travellers. Here meet our Bhutanese National Escort/Local Guide. Visit Zangtho Pelri, a small temple built in the centre of town – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below.

## Day 15: Phuentsholing to Thimphu

Thimphu altitude – 2,248m to 2,648m

Drive approx. 6-7 hours (180km) to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, via the Kharbandi Gompa (a Tibetan Buddhist monastery). The main highway is undergoing widening; therefore ongoing construction may be present.

## Day 16: Thimphu

Thimphu altitude – 2,248m to 2,648m

Today is easy sightseeing in and around Thimphu. Lunch will be served at the hotel. See Tashichho Dzong the medieval fortress/monastery; visit the National Library, the nearby Institute for Zorig Chusum (Painting School) and view the National Institute of Traditional Medicine. After lunch visit the National Memorial Chorten, the state-run Handicrafts Emporium, the Folk Heritage Museum and the National Textile Museum. Also drive out of town to an enclosure which is part of Thimphu Zoo to see the unique Bhutanese Takin.

## Day 17: Thimphu to Punakha

Punakha altitude – 1300m

Drive approx. 3-4 hours (75km) to Punakha via Dochu-la (Pass) (3,140m). Arrive in Punakha and check into the hotel. Depending on your group booking, overnight

accommodation may be booked in Wangdue Phodrang – 30 minutes from Punakha. Later visit Punakha's 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dzong located 30 minutes from Punakha which will be easy sightseeing. – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below.

#### Day 18: Punakha to Bumthang via Trongsa

Bumthang altitude – 2,580m

Trongsa altitude – 2,180m

Drive approximately 7-8 hours (210km) to Bumthang via Trongsa. Today is a full day of driving and some quick sightseeing with a stop for lunch. The drive from Punakha to Pele-la (Pass) (3,300m) takes 2 hours. En route, visit Trongsa Dzong and Ta Dzong Museum– refer to **Appropriate Dress** below for all monasteries and the Dzong.

Continue towards Bumthang, driving across Yutong-La (Pass) and into Chumey Valley (3,425m) which takes 2 to 3 hours (67km). Refer to **Alternative transport and road conditions** above. When you reach Bumthang, check into your hotel.

**N.B: Please note: Most toilet stops today will be 'bush toilets' – make sure you have toilet paper in your possession.**

#### Day 19: Bumthang

Bumthang altitude – 2,580m

Touring this morning is mostly by foot over the local trails in the foothills surrounding Bumthang – easy bushwalking standard. After visiting Jambey Lhakhang, drive approx. 10 mins (2km) to Kurje Lhakhang then drive across the river to Tamshing Lhakhang then walk across the river to Tamshing Lhakhang which has some of the oldest wall paintings in Bhutan. Your last stop is Jakar Dzong, overlooking the Chokhor Valley. Sightseeing today will involve around 6-7 hours on foot with a break for lunch.

#### Day 20: Bumthang to Punakha

Gangtey altitude – 3,000m

Punakha altitude – 1,300m

Drive approx. 7-8 hours (240km) from Bumthang to Punakha. Shortly after passing through Pele-la (Pass) leave the National Highway and drive (30 minutes) into Gangtey Valley. A few kilometres beyond the Gangtey Gompa on the valley floor, is the village of Phobjikha the

winter home of the black necked cranes. After a picnic lunch in the valley, drive to Punakha for an overnight stay. Refer to **Road Conditions** below.

#### Day 21: Punakha to Paro

Paro altitude – 2,280m

Rise early to hike to Chimi Lhakhang. Drive approx. 4 hours (124km) to Paro visiting Simtokha Dzong en route. Upon arrival, check into the hotel. Later visit Ta Dzong, and Rinpung Dzong (home of the Paro Tshechu Festival) – steady uphill walk to reach both may be required. Refer to **Appropriate Dress** below for visiting the Dzongs.

#### Day 22: Paro

Paro altitude – 2,280m

Drive (approx. 20 minutes) to the start point for a hike to Taktshang Monastery – see **Climbing Steps and Treks** section below. There are ponies for hire, but pony operators will not take any passenger over 80kg. **Cost of pony is not included in the tour price and paid for at the time. The price ranges from 10-15 USD.**

The moderate hike takes all morning meaning a vegetarian lunch is served at the cafeteria located inside the Monastery, which is run by monks. Afterwards, return to Paro and visit Drugyal Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang, (if time permits) one of the oldest and most sacred temples of the Kingdom. After you have completed the trek drive back to Paro, visiting Kyichu Lhakhang en route.

#### Day 23: Paro to Kolkata

We will have an early drive (approx. 20 minutes) to the airport for a flight to Kolkata (1hour). Check into the hotel upon arrival. Enjoy the day at leisure to do some last minute shopping.

#### Day 24: Depart Kolkata

Transfer to the airport according to the time of your international flight.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Before You Leave

**Itinerary Changes** - The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but some road construction and/or weather conditions may still lengthen the driving times.

**Visas** - A visa is required for entry into India. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. You will need to complete the visa application form online at: <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/>. Once completed you will need to print the completed form, and send it to our office along with your passport and 2 photos per person. The photos should be 2 x 2 in size taken within the last 6 months, in order for our office to process your visa with the embassy. We will require all this information 8 weeks prior to departure. As per our standard visa processing service, we will have your passport for at least 4 weeks. Any passports and visa applications that require an express service, or that are received in our office less than 6 weeks prior to departure will incur a £50 per passport express fee. Your passport must be valid for 6 months from your date of return from India, and should have at least 2 blank pages for your Indian visa.

A visa is required for entry into Bhutan. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. In order to process the Bhutan visa, we require clear readable colour copy of passport (page containing passport no and face picture in JPEG or PDF format) at least 30 days prior to date of entry into Bhutan. Remaining validity of passport should be at least 6 months from the date of entry into Bhutan (excluding the travelling month).

Tourism Council of Bhutan issues visa clearance letter closer to travelling date will be handed to you by your Indian guide before you travel to Bhutan. Travellers are required to produce aforesaid visa clearance copy at the time of check-in for Druk Air flight, whilst those entering Bhutan by surface via Phuentsholing or Samdrup Jonkhar, they are required to produce this Visa Clearance letter at the Immigration counter. Actual visa is stamped on passport on arrival in Bhutan.

Guests are required to have multiple entry visas for India if they are travelling to Bhutan from India and again re-entering into India from Bhutan. Please also check if your Indian visa has '2 months re-entry restriction'. If restriction has been stamped in your Indian visa, you have to get it endorsed by Indian embassy in Thimphu also, however you need to be in Thimphu on working days, Mon – Fri during office time excluding government holidays, to allow you to re-enter India. You will be asked to provide the proof of your travel to Bhutan (Druk air booking etc).

In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation and/or be required to attend an interview at the embassy. If this is the case we will notify you as soon as we are advised.

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your local GP or a travel doctor for advice on vaccinations and travel health. [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) is a comprehensive website that you may also find useful.

**Climate** - Please refer to the travel guides on our website for detailed temperature charts.

### Altitude

This itinerary spends the majority of the time traversing high altitudes. During the tour you will experience the following altitudes (approximations):

Darjeeling	2,145m	Trongsa	2,180m
Pelling	2,150m	Pele La Pass	3,300m
Gangtok	1,800m	Yutong La Pass	3,425m
Kalimpong	1,250m	Bumthang	2,580m
Thimphu	2,248m	Paro	2,280m
Dochu La Pass	3,140m	Taktsang Monastery	3,180m
Punakha	1,300m	(Tigers Nest)	



These are considered to be moderate, rather than high altitudes and people rarely have any trouble with these. Your group will be driving and therefore ascending gradually in altitude, which is one of the best ways to minimise the effects of AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness). It is recommended to drink more (water, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks) and avoid exertion after arriving at altitude.

Mild symptoms of AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) occur in some people and include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36 hours at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. It is always important to increase your intake of bottled water during travel to help ease the effects of AMS. If symptoms worsen, you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately. If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your Doctor before undertaking this itinerary.

### **Exchanging Cash**

It is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside Kolkata, Darjeeling and Thimphu that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. US dollars are easily exchanged throughout India, Sikkim and Bhutan however, other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort/Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

Before departing Paro, all tour participants are asked to please ensure that they have changed any remaining Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN) back into Indian Rupees (INR).

**Insurance** - It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

**Group Size** – All our group tours are guaranteed to run subject to a minimum number of 8 travelers and a National Escort will accompany each group of over 10. The maximum group size varies depending on the tour, but is usually no more than 12 passengers.

### **Luggage**

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that Bhutanese authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

Druk Air, your carrier for your flight from Paro to Kolkata, only permits a maximum checked luggage limit of 20kgs. **Please keep this in mind when packing for your upcoming trip. Any excess luggage charges incurred will be at the expense of the passenger.**

**Your accommodation** - All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulties please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage type hotel. In remote areas accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK, India, Sikkim and Bhutan. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

### **Alternative or basic accommodation**

At Gorumara you will be staying overnight in basic Government run accommodation. In Bhutan, hotels on our tours are generally 'medium range'. Hotels in Bhutan (other than those which are classed as deluxe properties and are extremely overpriced and expensive) are allocated one month prior to travel by the tourist authority. Unless you are staying in one of

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these deluxe hotels or visiting outside of the peak times, no particular hotel or room category can be guaranteed prior to that. All hotels we do use have private bathrooms and have air conditioning and/or a ceiling fan and bar/restaurant facilities. Travellers should however be cautioned against expecting princely comfort! Tea and coffee facilities are generally not available in your room. Some hotels do not have fridges, though in the colder months they are unnecessary if you have a balcony.

Please bear in mind that all levels of hotels can sometimes suffer from minor problems and technical difficulties (see Electricity). At each hotel your Tour Leader will try to organise the rooming arrangements to suit everyone's requirements. If you are travelling as a couple please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds.

**Meals** - All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the day of departure. Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout India.

Bhutanese cuisine consists of steamed rice (red or white) served with spicy curries and can be vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Most hotels offer buffet-style meals that include Continental, Chinese and Bhutanese food.

**Tipping** - As with most countries, tipping is a recognised part of life in India and Bhutan. For our passengers' convenience we ask for a specified amount to be paid at the beginning of our group tours to cover tipping for guides, drivers, restaurant staff etc. Approximate tipping amounts can be found on our website. Exact tipping amounts will be stated in your final documentation, approx. 2-3 weeks before departure. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

**Personal Expenses** - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of £150 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can't resist a bargain consider allocating a higher amount.

**Climbing Steps** - Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses/Dzongs and some temples/Chortens involves climbing some steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside. Finally, the old hill station towns, such as Darjeeling, are located at a higher and cooler elevation and were developed as resorts to escape the heat of the lowland. They are usually made up of interconnecting roads, steps and sloped pathways so walking around the town, or even within the grounds of your hotel, may require some physical effort.

#### Taktshang Monastery (Tiger's Nest)

As the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries is perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro Valley floor, this trek deserves its own mention. The climb is steep in some places and can be unstable under foot, particularly on the downward legs as steps are only found between the view point and the monastery with the remainder of the path being dirt. Despite this, the journey is certainly worthwhile on account of the superb views en route. However, this is quite a physically challenging hike and any customers that have poor knees, are prone to vertigo, dislike heights or are physically unfit will certainly struggle to keep up and at best may only make it to the halfway point; the cafeteria where lunch is served! The view from this point is quite spectacular should you not wish to continue to the top.

The hike to the monastery can be broken down into various stages. The first stage is the trek to the cafeteria (lunch stop) which is situated on a rocky outcrop across a ravine from the monastery. This leg of the trek takes approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on your level of fitness. Horses (really only small ponies) can be arranged for this leg at your own cost. Please note that the pony operators will not take any passenger over approximately 80kg in weight.

The second stage of the walk is from the cafeteria to the lookout opposite the monastery. This leg takes close to another hour. At this point some may be content to snap photos and return to the cafeteria.

The next stage is the trek/climb down the steps in the cliff face to the bottom of the ravine which crosses over a stream and waterfall before the path again ascends to the entrance of the monastery. Once here we should be able to enter into the

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monastery and view the cave where Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal meditated. (Please note that cameras are not allowed inside the monastery). The visit and climb to the entrance and back to the lookout will take about another hour.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### Optional Tours

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide. For example, while in Kalimpong you will have some free time, so you may wish to participate in a Horticulture class, visit the Pine View Nursery, or Santi Kunj or Nurseryman's Haven to see the orchids. If you wish to visit a local school, your National Escort/Local Guide can assist you in arranging a visit to the Gandhi Ashram School, which is payable at the time.

**Appropriate dress** – When visiting Dzongs, Chortens and Monasteries, both men and women should avoid wearing tight or revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a long sleeved shirt for men and women are considered appropriate when visiting these sites. While at Paro Dzong (Ta Dzong) men are asked to please wear a collared shirt.

Make sure you allow for climate changes throughout the day as you will experience different weather patterns whilst you traverse multiple and significant changes in altitude daily. You will generally find it is better to have several thin layers rather than one thick layer as it gives you more flexibility and warmth. A fleece can be invaluable and double as a pillow on the long road trips.

***Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet during temple visits and from any rough or hot surfaces.*** The itinerary below will indicate when you need to consider this.

Please refer to our Travel Guide for more information under the *Appropriate Dress* section.

### Alternative transport and road conditions

While in India, transport for all sightseeing will be in a small coach (no more than 24 seats). Transport in Darjeeling may be in separate 4WD vehicles (4 tour participants per vehicle). In Darjeeling, you will travel to Tiger Hill on board a **sumo** truck. During your time in Bhutan, you will be transported in a mini coach (no more than 18 seats) as the roads wind around mountains and through valleys, and it is easier to navigate in this type of vehicle. Your luggage will most likely travel in a second vehicle. Leg room on these small coaches may be restricted. Depending on local conditions, you may experience an elephant ride in Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary.

**Road Condition:** Time taken in getting from A to B in this region is usually dependent on the size of your group. Roads in Sikkim and particularly in Bhutan are mostly remote country roads, tarred but a single lane. Though marked as dual lanes, they are invariably the width of one and a half lanes. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to.

Most of the roads are also very winding and are cut into a cliff face, giving you a magnificent view of the scenery and mountains as you drive past. This means space to pass is at a premium, and although distances are not large the time to travel these distances is a lot longer than it would take in the UK. Continual road works are also taking place in Bhutan, with rocks being extracted to be used in the Hydro Electric Power Stations that are under construction in Bhutan. This will impact on drive times and may mean some days are full of driving including comfort stops throughout the day. Though there are toilet stops at cafes and restaurants, some will be at 'bush toilets' en-route, hence it is a good idea to carry some toilet paper with you at all times. Refer to your *Travel Guide's* TRANSPORT section for more information.

### Electricity

The supply of electricity can be unreliable in the hill stations and smaller towns of Sikkim, West Bengal and particularly East Bhutan (despite Hydroelectricity being Bhutan's largest GNP earner) – e.g. Darjeeling commonly has blackouts. Please refer to our Travel Guide for more information under the *Electricity* section.

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**Smoking in Bhutan** - Foreign travellers are permitted to smoke in Bhutan, provided they declare all tobacco products on the border at Phuentsholing (overland border between Sikkim and Bhutan). At this time, a tax of 200% will be applied in order for you to bring your tobacco products into Bhutan. You will be given a receipt for this, and you must carry this with you at all times. Harsh penalties and imprisonment result from not following these rules. Wendy Wu Tours asks that all passengers who wish to smoke in Bhutan respect religious monuments by not smoking in these areas. Please always check with your National Escort/Local Guide on where it is appropriate to smoke.

**After your Booking**

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form with help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2-3 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, badge, lanyard, feedback form, travel guide, along with your final itinerary and international e-tickets.

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