

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.

Visit botanic gardens and orchid 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. We'll also explore the Thangu Valley which is carpeted with alpine flowers in May, and Tsomgo Lake, a glacial lake in eastern Sikkim.

Come join us as we discover the foothills and mountains of Himalayan India with the Pacific Horticulture Society's **Greg Graves** and **Alister Adhikari**.





## **ITINERARY**

## 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 our Hotel.

## Day 3 - Delhi, Bagdogra, Darjeeling/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. Elgin Hotel, Darjeeling (2 nights). B,L,D

### Day 4 — Darjeeling & Lloyds Botanical Garden

After breakfast, we will explore Darjeeling including the Bhutay Busty Monastery and Tibetan Self Help Centre. At the Takvar Tea Factory, we will sample teas and see the process of tea making. 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/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 expect to find Cardicrinum giganteum and many Arisaema species as we drive along forested areas. The guardian mountain Kanchenjunga

rises to 8,585 meters (28,169 feet) above Sikkim, and is the third highest mountain 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 (1 night)*. B,L,D

## Day 6 — Gangtok & Lachung/6hrs/9500ft.

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 7 — 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 *R. mekongense*, 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 unconquered 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

#### Day 8 — 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. B,L,D

### Day 9 — Lachung - Lachen

After breakfast, we will drive to the Dombang valley to explore the rich diverse forest where we will find plants like the Iris, Pleione, Arisaema, Cardiocrinum, Asarum,



Paris, Roscoea,
Trillidiums, various
Rhododendron,
Polygonatum,
Smilacina,
Viburnumand and
many more. We will
take short walks
through the forest and
later cross the

Sebozung Chu to get to the other side of the valley to explore. In the afternoon, we will head to Lachen which is a a small hamlet separated by deep gorges of Lachen Chu and pine clad mountains with their snowy peaks and black cliffs. The village used to be inhabited only in winters by the owners who spent the summers on the alpine pastures along the Tibet border tending to their herd of yaks. Overnight at the Apple Orchard in Lachen (2 nights). B,L,D

Days 10/11 — Lachen - Thangu/12,880 ft

This morning, we'll drive 30 km beyond Lachen to reach Thangu valley, at an altitude of 3963m (12,880 ft). We'll have a full day of tracking in the Thangu area which in May and June is carpeted with alpine flowers! Tree lines disappear at Thangu and start a zone that can be compared only with the unreachable terrain in the Tibetan plateau. Situated on the high alpine plateau, Thangu is an ideal place for real nature lovers as it provides a base for fabulous walks. On Day 11, we'll drive back to Gangtok spotting plants along the way. Hidden Forest Retreat (2 nights). B,L,D

Day 12 — Tsomgo Lake

Today we will have a full day botanizing in the Tsomgo Lake and Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary. Tsomgo Lake, also known as Changu Lake, is a glacial lake in East Sikkim, some 40 km from Gangtok, situated at 3,753



metres (12,880 ft). The lake surface reflects different colors with the change of seasons and is held in great reverence by the local Sikkimese people.

The Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary, situated

around the area adjoining the Tsomgo lake. It is rich in both flora and fauna. Rare, endangered ground orchids and rhododendrons interspersed among tall junipers and taller silver firs are among the important plants present. *Rhododendron niveum* (the State Tree of Sikkim) and *Cypripedium tibeticum* (the ground slipper orchid) which is on the verge of extinction have also been introduced here. In the evening, explore the local market and the town square. B,L,D

## LEADERSHIP

Leading the expedition will be **Alister Adhikari**, a tour guide and botanical specialist in the Darjeeling–Sikkim area of the Indian Himalayas. Representing the Pacific Horticulture Society will be **Greg Graves**.

Alister was born in Kalimpong, West Bengal, India and graduated from Delhi University. From a very early age, Alister accompanied his father, who is a veteran tour guide, throughout Sikkim and the Darjeeling Himalayas. Since 2006, he has been conducting guided botanical tours in Sikkim, the Darjeeling Himalayas, and other nearby areas.

Greg Graves is the past president of the Northwest Horticultural Society and of the Pacific Horticultural Society. He is a member of that board. Greg was the head gardener at the E.C. Miller Botanical Garden in Seattle for 13 years. He is on the perennial committee of 'Great Plant Picks' (greatplantpicks.org) and manages Old Goat Farm, a garden and specialty nursery in the Seattle area. Greg has been the Pacific Horticulture representative on trips to Sardinia in 2006, Tibet in 2010, Cuba in 2013, and Sikkim in 2015.

Alister and Greg look forward to showing you the fascinating sites in Sikkim & the Darjeeling Himalayas.

Day 13 - Gangtok & Kalimpong. /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. Silver Oaks Hotel. B,L,D

Days 14/15 — Kalimpong, Bagdogra, & Delhi

Drive to Bagdogra Airport for our return flights to Delhi and home. B,L







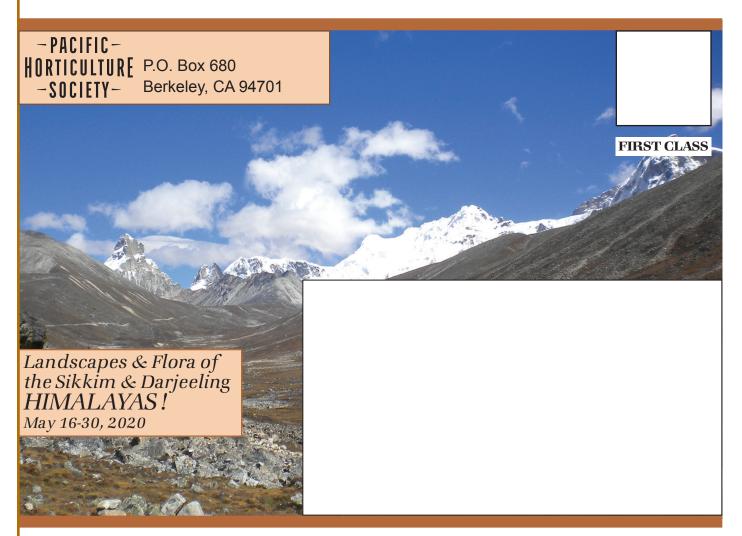
# RESERVATIONS

Yes! I/we want to join the Sikkim & Darjeeling

#1582

<b>Himalayas Expedition, May 16-30, 2020,</b> offered by the <b>Pacific Horticulture Society and Betchart</b>
<b>Expeditions Inc</b> . Please reserve space(s). As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for \$ (\$500 per person)
payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.
Name(s) Age
Age
Address
City State Zip
Phone: Home ()Work ()
Email Address
Membership in Pacific Horticulture Society? Yes No To participate in this tour, non-members must pay a fee of \$50 per person. Please make a separate check payable to Pacific Horticulture Society.
Accommodations Preference:
Twin Single Twin Share: with a friend <i>or</i> Nonsmoker Smoker assign a roommate
Signature Date
Signature Date

Please Mail To: Sikkim Himalayas 2020 Betchart Expeditions Inc. 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435



## **COSTS & CONDITIONS**

**Trip Fee:** \$4,295 per person plus \$350 per person donation to Pacific Horticulture Society. Air fare is \$1,795 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 and wildflower 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 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 betcharttaunya@gmail.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 2020, 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. and the Pacific Horticulture 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. Bagage 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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