



# Christmas Beyond the Brahmaputra

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 2

Kolkata – Gangtok – Darjeeling – Guwahati – 7N Brahmaputra River Cruise –  
Kolkata

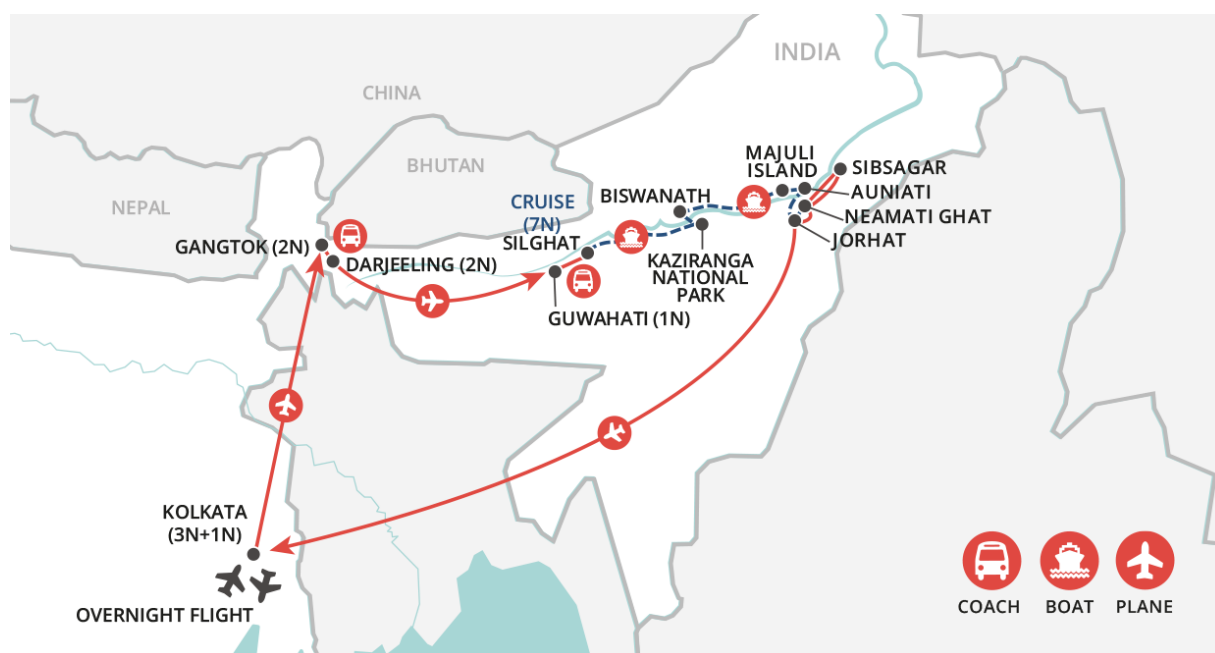
Celebrate Christmas amid Darjeeling's stunning mountain landscapes! Journey from Kolkata into the Himalayas, ride the iconic toy train, then head to Guwahati to explore Assam's rich heritage aboard a luxury Brahmaputra River cruise – immersing in nature, culture and festivities while welcoming the New Year in style.

- Visit Darjeeling Christmas market
- On Christmas morning watch the sunrise over a snow-capped Kanchenjunga
- Sail the Brahmaputra in a luxury riverboat on a seven-night cruise
- Explore the sights of Kolkata
- Safari in Kaziranga National Park

To book call **1300 727 998** or visit your local travel agent

Visit [wendywutours.com.au](http://wendywutours.com.au)

## TOUR MAP



## CHRISTMAS BEYOND THE BRAHMAPUTRA TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- 7 nights Assam Bengal Navigation Cruise on ABN Charaidew II
- All meals
- Unlimited drinks during lunch & dinner (Indian-origin beer, wine and soft drinks only)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) and Local Guides. National Escort will not accompany on the cruise.
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders (please see visa section below for further information)
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

## CLASSIC TOURS:

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These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of India on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

## PHYSICAL LEVEL 2:

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All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Christmas Beyond the Brahmaputra' is rated as a physical level 2 tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- Approx. 2 hours Heritage Walk tour in Kolkata
- Some people may have altitude/mountain sickness while travelling in Darjeeling/Gangtok area.
- Very early morning visit to Tiger Hill (0400 hrs) in Darjeeling.
- Climbing approx. around 100 stairs while The Buddha Park of Ravangla
- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Sightseeing at nearly all of the monasteries, temples, ect. involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails

This tour has been carefully designed to minimise the effects of Altitude Sickness whilst in **Darjeeling & Gangtok**. Please be prepared for mild symptoms of Altitude Mountain Sickness (AMS) which include dizziness, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, breathlessness, headache and disturbed sleep. 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. If symptoms worsen, you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately. The following precautions may help to prevent or lessen the effects of AMS:

- Since fluid loss usually accompanies the acclimatisation process, drink plenty of fluids (3 - 4 litres daily at least) and eat carbohydrate food to keep the body properly hydrated
- Do not over exert and only partake in light activity immediate after your arrival
- Don't smoke, drink alcohol or take other depressants such as tranquilisers and sleeping pills, as these depress the respiratory drive and reduce oxygen intake.
- Assume any sickness at high altitude is AMS until proven otherwise
- Never ascend to higher altitudes while showing symptoms of AMS
- You must report any symptoms of AMS immediately to your National Guide

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### JOINING YOUR TOUR:

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The tour is 18 days in duration including international flights or 17 days in duration based on 'Land Only'. Join the tour on Day 1 in Kolkata and end the tour on Day 17 in Kolkata.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours.

### ITINERARY CHANGES:

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It's our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

**Days 1: Fly to Kolkata**

Meals: D

On arrival in Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, you will be met in the arrival hall by your local guide and/or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer approximately 45 minutes to your hotel.

Early check-in is not included. Additional nights' before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.

An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 1. If you miss this due to your arrival time, all information will be provided to you at breakfast the following morning.

**Destination Information**

**Kolkata** - Formerly known as Calcutta, is the capital of West Bengal and a cultural hub of India. Established as a trading post by the British in the 17th century, it flourished as a centre of education, arts, and politics. The city boasts colonial architecture, vibrant festivals, and diverse culinary traditions.

**Day 2: Explore Kolkata**

Meals: B, L, D

The capital of West Bengal and widely considered India's cultural capital, in Kolkata is a place of fascinating contrasts, something that you will explore on today's tour of the city. See landmark sights like Birla Planetarium, Belur Math, Dakineshwar Kali Temple and the spectacular white marble edifice of the Victoria Memorial before, this evening, taking a walking tour to Park Street, the famous thoroughfare in Kolkata's downtown area.

**Destination Information**

**Birla Planetarium** - Established in 1963, the planetarium serves as a premier centre for astronomical education and exploration. Renowned for its domed architecture, it offers immersive sky theatre presentations, exhibits on celestial phenomena, and interactive programs.

**Belur Math** – The global headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897. Renowned for its architectural fusion of Hindu, Christian, and Islamic styles, it symbolizes unity in diversity. The serene campus promotes spirituality, education, and humanitarian values.



**Dakineshwar Kali Temple** - A significant Hindu temple dedicated to Goddess Kali, established in 1855 by philanthropist Rani Rashmoni. Renowned for its Bengal-style architecture, it holds historical and spiritual importance, being closely associated with saint Ramakrishna.

**Victoria Memorial** – A monumental symbol of British colonial history, built between 1906 and 1921 to commemorate Queen Victoria's reign. Designed in Indo-Saracenic architectural style, it houses a museum showcasing artifacts, paintings, and manuscripts from India's colonial period.

**Park Street** - A historic thoroughfare in Kolkata, is renowned for its vibrant cultural and culinary scene. Known as "The Street That Never Sleeps," it features colonial-era buildings, iconic restaurants, and entertainment hubs.

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**Day 3: British Kolkata**

Meals: B, L, D

The capital of the British Raj between 1858 and 1911, Kolkata is home to a series of colonial sights which you will visit on this morning walking tour, including the stately Dalhousie Square. This afternoon, you'll pay a visit to Mother House, a quiet convent that was home to Mother Teresa and her missionary sisters since 1953. Visit her tomb and a small museum dedicated to her life and work. *Please note the walking tour will last approximately 2 hours.*

**Destination Information**

**Dalhousie Square** - A historically significant district in Kolkata, reflecting the administrative epicentre of British colonial rule. Surrounded by landmarks like the Writers' Building, General Post Office, and St. John's Church, it showcases 18th-19th century colonial architecture.

**Mother Teresa House** – The headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity, established by Saint Teresa in 1950 to serve the poor and marginalized. The site includes her tomb and a museum showcasing her life, work, and global impact, offering profound insights into humanitarian service and history.

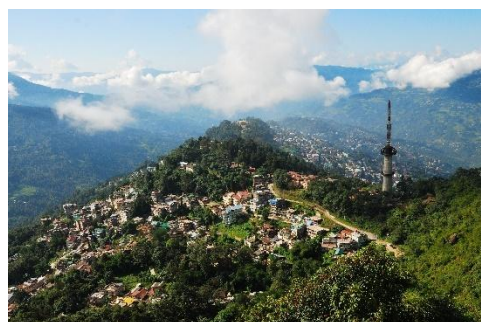
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**Day 4: Travel to Gangtok**

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer to the airport (approximately 45 minutes) and fly to Bagdogra (flight time 1 hour 5 minutes). On arrival, drive to Gangtok, a scenic 4 hour mountainous drive, winding through the incredible landscapes of Sikkim, with towering Himalayan peaks as your backdrop.

*Please note while driving to Gangtok area some people may experience sickness due to the increase in altitude.*



### Destination Information

**Gangtok** - The capital of Sikkim, India, is a picturesque hill town nestled in the Himalayas. Known for its breathtaking views of Mount Kanchenjunga, it serves as a cultural and spiritual hub with monasteries like Rumtek, a major centre of Tibetan Buddhism, and served as an important trade route.

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#### Day 5: Explore Gangtok

Meals: B, L, D

Sikkim's bustling state capital, Gangtok sits on the side of a hill overlooking the valleys and peaks of the Himalayan foothills. Today you will explore it, visiting the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Rumtek, the region's most spiritually significant monastery, Enchey Monastery with its colourful prayer hall, the Tashi Viewpoint, where you'll get spectacular views of Mount Khangchendzonga and more. You'll also fly your way up the cable ropeway for panoramic views of the city and its surroundings.



### Destination Information

**Rumtek Monastery** - One of Tibetan Buddhism's most important centres. Built in the 1960s, it serves as the seat of the Karmapa, leader of the Karma Kagyu lineage. Renowned for its traditional architecture and sacred relics, it is a vital site for Buddhist learning and spiritual practice.

**Enchey Monastery** – A 200-year-old Buddhist monastery of the Nyingma tradition. Believed to be blessed by Lama Drupthob Karpo, it features traditional Tibetan architecture and vibrant murals. Renowned for its annual Cham dance festival, it remains a centre for spirituality, cultural heritage, and Buddhist learning

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#### Day 6: Christmas Eve - Travel to Darjeeling

Meals: B, L, D

Soak up the incredible scenery as you travel through the Himalayan foothills on Christmas Eve, passing through vast expanses of tea plantations as you approach the hill station of Darjeeling (approximately 4 hour drive). En-route, you'll stop at the Ravangla Buddha Park to admire a 40-metre-tall copper Buddha set against a mountainous backdrop. You'll find Darjeeling festooned in festive cheer, with twinkling lights, colourful decorations and Christmas trees, the colder climes and snowy mountain views adding to the Christmas ambiance. This evening, enjoy a celebratory Christmas Eve dinner before an atmospheric midnight mass in a local church.



*Please note to reach The Buddha Park of Ravangla you will be required to climb approx. 100 steps. Please note: Electricity shortages are common in Darjeeling.*

### Destination Information

**Darjeeling** – A historically significant hill station established by the British in the 19th century as a summer retreat. Famous for its tea plantations and panoramic Himalayan views, including Mount Kanchenjunga, it is also home to the UNESCO-listed Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.

**Ravangla Buddha Park** – Inaugurated in 2013 to mark the 2550th birth anniversary of Lord Buddha. The site features a 130-foot Buddha statue and is part of the Himalayan Buddhist Circuit. It highlights Buddhist teachings, art, and architecture while serving as an educational centre for spiritual and cultural heritage.

### Day 7: Christmas Day - Kanchenjunga Sunrise

Meals: B, L, D

Merry Christmas! Start the day in spectacular fashion, travelling up Tiger Hill to watch the sun rising over the 8,586 metre Kanchenjunga (weather dependent) – if you're lucky there might even be a sprinkling of snow! Sit down to a hearty Christmas lunch before an afternoon ride on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway's 'toy train' from Darjeeling to Ghoom. Visit Ghoom Monastery before returning to Darjeeling to tour the Padmaja Naidu Zoological Park, the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and Tibetan Refugee Center. This evening, enjoy a stroll through the lively Christmas market.



### Destination Information

**Darjeeling Himalayan Railway** – A UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a historic narrow-gauge railway built in 1881. Known as the "Toy Train," it connects New Jalpaiguri to Darjeeling, showcasing engineering marvels like loops and zigzags.

**Ghoom Monastery** – One of the region's oldest Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, established in 1850. Also known as Yiga Choeling Monastery, it houses a 15-foot statue of Maitreya Buddha and ancient manuscripts.

**Padmaja Naidu Zoological Park** – India's highest-altitude zoo, renowned for its conservation of endangered Himalayan species like snow leopards, red pandas, and Tibetan wolves, it focuses on breeding programs and wildlife research.

### Day 8: Fly to Guwahati

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer back to Bagdogra airport (approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes) and fly to Guwahati (1 hour 20 minutes flight time). The rest of the day is at leisure.





### Destination Information

**Guwahati** - The largest city in Assam, India, is a cultural, educational, and economic hub of Northeast India.

#### Day 9: Board your cruise

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer to Silghat (approximately 4 hour drive), a port on the Brahmaputra River, where you'll board your river cruise vessel. With a spa, saloon, and spacious sun deck along with cool and roomy cabins with floor-to-ceiling sliding windows for optimum views, there is no better to explore the rich riverbanks of the mighty Brahmaputra. Cast off and begin your upstream cruise, enjoying lunch and dinner onboard.



### Destination Information

**Brahmaputra River** – Originating from the Angsi Glacier in Tibet and traversing through Assam, India and Bangladesh before merging with the Ganges, is one of Asia's major rivers spanning 2,900km. Known for its vast basin and rich biodiversity, it sustains agriculture, transportation, and cultural practices.

#### Day 10: Kaziranga Safari

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, disembark from the ship and take a jeep safari into the central range of the Kaziranga National Park. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Kaziranga is best known for its population of Indian one-horned rhinoceros and is a designated tiger reserve. Alongside these two magnificent creatures, Kaziranga is also home to elephants, sloth bears, pangolin, water buffalo, swamp deer and a number of species of primate, among much more, and is an important habitat for birds. Enjoy a riverside lunch before hopping back into jeeps to explore the park's western reaches, where there is even more wonderful wildlife to spot.



### Destination Information

**Kaziranga National Park** – A UNESCO World Heritage Site in Assam, is renowned for its population of one-horned rhinoceroses. Established in 1905, it spans wetlands, grasslands, and forests along the Brahmaputra River. Enjoy safari rides here and experience the array of wildlife

**Day 11: Tea Estate**

Meals: B, L, D

Spend the morning on a tea experience on a picturesque Assam tea estate. Here you'll learn all about the production process, from plucking the leaves to brewing a cup. Back on the boat, cruise upstream, passing through more of Kaziranga National Park's spectacular wilderness, spotting wildlife on the banks of the river as you go. Drop anchor near Biswanath village.

**Destination Information**

**Assam Tea Estate** – These tea estates are renowned for producing robust, malty black tea. Established during British colonial rule in the 19th century, Assam became a global tea hub. With sprawling plantations along the Brahmaputra Valley, it remains central to India's tea industry and a symbol of its colonial past.

**Biswanath Village** – The village holds historical significance for its ancient Biswanath Temple, built during the medieval Ahom reign and dedicated to Lord Shiva.

**Day 12: Biswanath Village**

Meals: B, L, D

Head into the village, where there is a rich, cultural heritage to explore. Biswanath's ghat is home to a cluster of temples dedicated to different gods, including an Ahom-era Shiva temple – discover these and have a wander through the town, soaking up the beautiful riverside and rural surroundings. Continue cruising through Kaziranga National Park, keeping a look out for wild elephants. Then, spend the afternoon up on the ship's sun deck where you may be lucky enough to spot a member of a small population of the endangered Ganges River dolphins.

**Destination Information**

**Ganges River Dolphin** - An endangered freshwater species found in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and their tributaries. Blind due to murky waters, it uses echolocation for navigation.

**Day 13: New Year's Eve - Day of Cruising**

Meals: B, L, D

Today, New Year's Eve you'll be able to sit back, relax and watch the river landscapes drift by as you cruise upstream. There will be one stop at a rural riverside village where a walking tour is a great way to stretch your legs. This evening, you'll be served a celebratory dinner with a cheers at midnight – what a way to see out the old year and see in the new one!

**Day 14: Majuli Island**

Meals: B, L, D

Happy New Year! Explore one of the world's largest river islands, Majuli, which is a fascinating microcosm of local culture. Visit two of the island's tranquil satras (monasteries) that have been essential in preserving Assamese art and culture and enjoy a traditional dance performance. Cruise farther upstream to Salmara Ghat, visiting a nearby village that is known for its traditional handicrafts, to see the artisans at work.

**Destination Information**

**Majuli Island** – The world's largest river island and renowned for its vibrant culture, it houses Vaishnavite monasteries (Satras) promoting art and spirituality. It is also to many lagoons and rice paddies for agricultural purposes.

**Salmara Ghat** – A historically significant as a centre for traditional boat-making and river trade. The community is renowned for crafting wooden boats using ancient techniques passed down generations.

**Day 15: Visit Sibsagar**

Meals: B, L, D

Transfer by car to Sibsagar. Once the capital of the Ahom kings, explore the remnants of a fascinating culture with visits to old temples and examples of innovative engineering. Return to the ship and cruise back to Neamati Ghat for your final night onboard the ship.





### Destination Information

**Neamati Ghat** - A vital ferry point connecting the mainland to Majuli Island. Historically significant as a trade hub during the Ahom era, it serves as a gateway to Assam's cultural and natural treasures on the island.

**Sibsagar** - A historic town that served as the capital of the Ahom Kingdom for over a century. Renowned for its iconic Sivasagar Tank and Ahom-era monuments like Rang Ghar and Talatal Ghar, it reflects Assam's rich architectural and cultural heritage.

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#### Day 16: Return to Kolkata

Meals: B, L, D

Bid farewell to your river cruise ship, the ABN Charaidew II or ABN Sukapha and transfer 45 minutes to Jorhat airport for your 1 hour 45 minute flight back to Kolkata. The rest of the day is at leisure.



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#### Day 17-18: Fly to Australia

Meals: B

Any time before your flight is at leisure. You will be transferred from your hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your international flight.

Late check-out is not included. Please contact our Reservations team to pre-book.





## TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

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Entry visas are required by all visitors to India and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

For the latest information on visa procedures, processing times and requirements, please kindly refer to our website <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/help-and-advice/passports-and-visas/>

Please note, the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa. Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

Please also note a Sikkim permit will be needed to enter into this area. The national escort will organise this once in India. Please note in order to obtain the permit a photocopy of your passport, a photocopy of the stamp you receive on arrival into India (the National escort will help with this), and 1 passport sized photograph is required along with your original passport.

### INSURANCE:

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It is a condition of your booking that you are insured for the duration of your trip. We recommend comprehensive travel insurance to cover cancellation, medical requirements, luggage, repatriations and additional expenses. At a minimum, the policy is required to cover medical requirements including medical evacuations / repatriations. The choice of insurer is yours.

We strongly suggest you purchase insurance at the time you pay your deposit. This is because cancellation fees and charges are payable from that time. We may request you to provide evidence that you have taken out and paid for a policy to comply with this condition. If you fail to provide a certificate of currency of insurance within a reasonable time after our request, then this will be deemed a cancellation by you and standard cancellation fees will apply.

### GROUP SIZE:

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Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by both a National Escort and local guides. There will be no more than 20 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu our groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 10 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only. Please note that a National Escort will not accompany you on board the cruise – there will be guides, pursers, ship managers and other staff to help and guide during the 10 night cruise.

## EATING IN INDIA:

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Indian cuisine is one of the most influential, diverse and flavoursome culinary styles in the world. Indian dishes incorporate many spices and seasoning to create an explosion of flavours. Though Indian cuisine can vary greatly from the Indian food we get in Australia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our classic group tours, from dinner on the arrival day until breakfast on the day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

Dishes served in restaurants on our group tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based with meat mixed in, and a few will be meat-based. Our restaurants are aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options. When eating meals on group tours, you will usually be seated around a large table with other tour members. Dishes will be served in the traditional ‘family style’; meaning that various dishes will be laid out in the centre of the table. These dishes are intended to be shared amongst the group – there is always more than enough to feed everybody. Sikkimese cuisine depends greatly on the seasonal produce. Most meals will include grains (rice or barley), potatoes, vegetables and some meat.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in India. We recommend that when it comes to Indian food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

Bottled water will be provided on board the cruise and lunches will be at local restaurants.

## ACCOMMODATION:

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Your accommodation has been 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 western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local four to five-star standard but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning and a 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 difficulty, please speak to your National Escort or Local Guide.

## TRANSPORT:

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**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

Whilst travelling in Kolkata, an air conditioned coach will be used, however in Darjeeling, Gangtok and Guwahati where roads are narrower and windier smaller vehicles will be used which take maximum 4 persons per vehicle. The group will travel in convoy and all pick up and drop off times will be the same. We will keep companion travellers together whenever possible.

**Road Conditions:** Time taken in getting from A to B in this region is usually dependent on the size of your group. Roads in Sikkim are mostly 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.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

## TIPPING POLICY:

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Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and India is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. To avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. 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.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

## PORTERAGE:

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Please be aware that porterage is not included on our tours in India. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

### LUGGAGE:

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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 five kilograms due to domestic flight luggage restrictions. Excess luggage can be paid locally. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA:

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Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

### APPOPRIATE DRESS:

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When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and trousers or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend 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 from any rough or hot surfaces.

We recommend walking shoes, with good ankle support, that are easy to remove when required at certain sites.



## **PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:**

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Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed, and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. India Republic Day is on 26th January, the Holi Festival on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2025 & 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (The Hindu 'Festival of Colours' can include locals smearing coloured powder on one another. Every effort will be made to minimise the effect on passengers whilst touring). Diwali Festival (festival of light) is on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2025 & November 8<sup>th</sup> 2026.

## **CLIMBING STEPS:**

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Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense 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.

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.

## **VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:**

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We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.travelvax.com.au](http://www.travelvax.com.au)

## **BEFORE YOU LEAVE:**

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We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

## **AFTER YOUR BOOKING:**

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Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive an email with your confirmation invoice, along with a link to our website where you can find your visa information (if applicable) and other important information. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

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