



**RAILWAY  
ADVENTURES**

**2023**

# **HIMALAYAN RAILWAY ADVENTURE**

With Robert Kingsford-Smith

6 - 18 February 2023

• KOLKATA • SILIGURI • KURSEONG • DARJEELING •  
• BAGDOGRA • CHANDIGARH • SHIMLA • DELHI •

Himalayan Mountain Railway - Photo courtesy of Robert Kingsford-Smith

## INTRODUCTION

Come aboard this grand tour of one of the world's oldest and most fascinating cultures on a collection of world heritage-listed railways that forge their way into the spectacular landscapes of the Himalayan Mountains. Since its humble beginnings in 1854, the Indian Railways have become one of the largest and longest in the world and with 1.6 million on the payroll, it's also one of the world's largest employers. For travellers in India, the railway is a window to their culture and character, the lifeblood of the nation that is used by almost every Indian regularly in all manner of trains, from rustic non-reserved travelling slums to ultra-luxury palaces on wheels and the delightful little 'Toy Trains' that climb the impossibly routed railways up to the old colonial 'hill stations' of Northern India.

On this tour, you will see some of the grand relics of its fascinating rail history and visit some of the most amazing destinations in India, along with World Heritage sites that will take your breath away. The mountain railways of India are UNESCO World Heritage-listed in their own right, only the second railways in the world to be so acclaimed. Your journey will focus on how the British Raj escaped the heat of the plains with their mini-England Hill Stations accessed by quirky little mountain trains. The views are astounding, the culture is rich with history and colour and the trains you'll ride are some of the most celebrated and unique in the world.



Darjeeling Train in town

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Ride the legendary World Heritage-listed Himalayan Mountain Railway to Darjeeling
- Special steam hauled charters on the scenic sections of the mountain line
- Board private carriages on the Himalayan Queen Express for the journey to Shimla
- Take a tour from Delhi to Alwar on the world's oldest steam loco - The Fairy Queen
- Experience the Darjeeling Mail overnight sleeper train in upper class
- Fly across India from Bengal to Delhi with the Himalayas nestled below
- Visit the monastery at Ghum and the highest railway station in India
- See the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and Tibetan Refugee Centre
- See the sunrise over Kangchenjunga, India's highest peak
- Take time at the Viceroy's palace and the Monkey temple in Shimla
- Explore Kolkata on our own chartered vintage tram
- Take an optional extension to Jaipur and Agra to the Taj Mahal

## MEET YOUR **TOUR LEADER**



### **Robert Kingsford-Smith**

Robert has built on his childhood passion for railways of the 1960s, by embarking on a quest to record the world's disappearing steam locomotives on film. His often-adventurous travels have taken him to over forty countries and the resulting photographs and articles have appeared in numerous publications in Australia and overseas. Robert has led groups of likeminded travellers in destinations as diverse as South America, Pakistan and South Africa. More recently he has become the celebrated tour leader on many Railway Adventure tours through Outback Queensland, India and Sri Lanka. His passion for history and wildlife has been well served on his travels and he combines his interests with regular and extensive train travel. Cairns is of special significance for Robert because his great-great-grandfather, R. A. Kingsford, was its first mayor.

## TOUR MAP



Nights at the Hotel Nights on Board Train Coach Plane Optional Extra Trip

## WHY **TRAVEL WITH US**

The joy of travel is not confined to the destination. How you travel is a large and rich part of the experience. Railway Adventures offers a truly unique perspective on some of the world's most spectacular destinations, with the confidence that the journey will be just as magical and memorable as what is discovered at the end of the line.



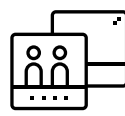
Unique  
**itineraries**



Authentic local  
**experiences**



Expert local  
**guides and  
operators**



Fully  
**escorted**



Small  
**group sizes**



Customer  
**satisfaction**

## SOME WAYS **YOU'LL TRAVEL**

The best train trips possible, private luxury coach for off-train travel, guided walking where suitable, and other appropriate and appealing options to make exploration easy.



The Fairy Queen



Darjeeling Toy Train



Kolkata Tram

### **Day 1 • Monday 06 February: KOLKATA**

Arrive in Kolkata by International flight. Upon arrival, you will be greeted and provided with assistance at the airport. You will transfer to the 5-star luxury of the Oberoi Grand Hotel. Spend the rest of your first day relaxing at this 125-year-old hotel, a fusion of classic Victorian and traditional Indian grandeur. The hotel has been an icon on the landscape of Kolkata for more than a century, with a reputation for taking care of its guests like no other. Kolkata is the erstwhile capital of colonial India, a thriving city famous for its culture, cuisine, and historical monuments. Often referred to as the City of Joy, it is also known for its unique 'Adda,' a freestyle exchange of socio-political ideas and intellectual debate that is engaged in enthusiastically within public spaces over a cup of steaming chai.

*Overnight: The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata*

### **Day 2 • Tuesday 07 February: KOLKATA**

We begin our day with a walking tour which will give us an insight into the confluence of culture that the city has experienced, more so than most other cities, even in the globalised present. During our walk, we will trace the origins and remains of the varied communities that hung their boots here and called Calcutta home. We will board a privately chartered heritage tram to explore the narrow streets and some of the most picturesque parts of the city. The Kolkata trams were due to be closed by the government, but Australian tram conductor Mr Roberto D'Andrea fought to save them and forged a strong bond between the two countries.

This evening we will gather for a celebratory welcome dinner with your tour leader, fellow travellers and our local guide.

*Overnight: The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata (B, L, D)*

### **Day 3 • Wednesday 08 February: KOLKATA - SILIGURI**

After a buffet breakfast at the hotel enjoy a guided tour of Kolkata visiting St. Paul's Cathedral, the Victoria Memorial Museum, and the Indian Museum before joining the pilgrims at the famous Kalighat Temple, where followers of many faiths gather each day to pray to the Mother Goddess Kali. We will also visit the Hooghly River which is integral to the very identity of Bengal. We will explore this visual, aural, and olfactory riot, from the wrestlers who exercise on its soft clay to the boatmen who ferry people across, from the flower-sellers to the boys who throw magnets and retrieve coin offerings from its bed, from the Howrah Bridge to the cremation Ghats. In the afternoon we soak up the atmosphere of this bustling city on a tour through the streets and in the evening, after dinner in the city, we board the legendary Darjeeling Mail Train. This train's name harks back to the colonial days and is now the pride of the modern Indian rail system. Spend the night in your first-class (or second-class) sleeping carriage a truly authentic Indian experience.

*Overnight: The Darjeeling Mail (B, L, D)*

### **Day 4 • Thursday 09 February: SILIGURI - KURSEONG**

The Darjeeling Mail pulls into Siliguri, nestled in the foothills of the mighty Himalayas, where you are transferred to the Sarovar Portico Hotel for breakfast and a chance to freshen up. Later in the morning, we board our private chartered train on the World Heritage-listed Himalayan Mountain Railway, parts of which are steam-hauled. At Tindharia you have the chance to visit the loco shed and explore some of the fascinating histories of this region and its amazing railway.

We then take a short coach ride from Tindharia to Kurseong through some very picturesque countryside. This area isn't called the Land of the White Orchids for nothing. In the afternoon we arrive and check in at the charming boutique hotel, Cochrane Place, which is the restored former colonial home and is dripping with the essence of the Raj. Inspired by the Railways, its rooms have been named after the famous railway sectors and spices native to the Indian subcontinent. Spend the rest of the day at leisure either at Cochrane Place or wander out into Kurseong and take in the spectacular views and wafting aromas of the region's most famous product – tea. Later you can indulge in the luxurious surroundings over dinner at the hotel.

*Overnight: Cochrane Place, Kurseong (B, L, D)*

### **Day 5 • Friday 10 February: KURSEONG - DARJEELING**

After breakfast we spend the morning on our chartered train riding from Kurseong to Darjeeling, employing steam locomotives again where possible. This railway rightly deserves its UNESCO listing. Zig-zagging, looping and even starting its journey travelling backwards, this amazing little train moves straight through a crowded bazaar and past many hill stations on its climb to world-famous Darjeeling. Transfer to the tranquillity and sedate colonial opulence of the Windamere Hotel and spend the rest of the day relaxing in your new surroundings. Established in the 19th century as a cosy boarding house for English and Scottish tea planters, it's now well known to sophisticated travellers the world over for its unique ambience and charm. Enjoy a cuppa as you take in the vista and catch sight of Kanchenjunga, the third-highest mountain in the world.

*Overnight: The Windamere Hotel, Darjeeling (B, D)*

### **Day 6 • Saturday 11 February: DARJEELING**

An early start is required to witness the magnificent sunrise over the majestic mountains at Tiger Hill where the dawn light hits the peak of Kangchenjunga, India's highest peak. In the afternoon we visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Zoological Park and Tibetan Refugee Centre where beautiful Tibetan handicrafts are made. You can also experience the story of the Dalai Lama and other refugees who have taken shelter in this beautiful sanctuary and then visit Happy Valley Tea Estate for tea tasting and then back in town take a walk- through Observatory Hill, or do some shopping in the famous Mall Road.

*Overnight: Windamere Hotel, Darjeeling (B, D)*

### **Day 7 • Sunday 12 February: DARJEELING - DELHI - CHANDIGARH**

Today we head back down the mountains to the foothills and the city of Bagdogra where we will board our flight to Delhi. Once in the grand city, we will be further transferred to the New Delhi railway terminal to board our late afternoon express train to Chandigarh arriving later in the evening. We will provide a boxed dinner and if you're still in need of sustenance, we will host a light supper at the hotel later.

*Overnight: Taj, Chandigarh (B, D)*

### **Day 8 • Monday 13 February: CHANDIGARH - SHIMLA**

After breakfast at the hotel, we transfer to Kalka for the iconic train journey on the Himalayan Queen in our own carriages attached to the main train. The scenic journey features all the character of a local train, calling at stations along the way and taking goods and passengers on their journeys over the five hours of the steady climb up the mountains. It's a journey acclaimed by UNESCO in its World Heritage Status. This journey is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to marvel at spectacular scenery on a line that winds its way up the mountains, crossing more than 800 bridges and diving through over 100 tunnels.

On arrival, we transfer to the hotel to settle in for the next three nights. Dinner will be hosted at the hotel.

*Overnight: Clarkes Hotel, Shimla (B, L, D)*

### Day 9 • Tuesday 14 February: SHIMLA

A century ago, the British selected Shimla as their summer capital, using it as a retreat from the blistering heat of the plains. Named 'the abode of the high and mighty,' Shimla is situated at over 2000m, with beautiful promenades, graceful colonial buildings, wooded ravines, evergreen forests, and the snow-capped Himalayas as a backdrop.

We will take a walking tour through the British heritage of the city. Begin with a visit to the Viceregal Lodge. The official summer residence of the British viceroys was completed in 1888 and the entire Indian subcontinent was ruled from here for just over half of every year (usually early April to late October) from then till WWII.

Also, we will stop by the Gaiety Theatre - this lovely Victorian theatre, opened in 1877 and now splendidly restored, has long been a focus of Shimla's social life. Rudyard Kipling and various viceroys are among those who have trodden its Burmese teak boards.

*Overnight: Clarkes Hotel, Shimla (B, L, D)*

### Day 10 • Wednesday 15 February: SHIMLA

Today you are welcome to have a day at leisure, however we will happily host a tour to visit the Shimla Water Catchment Sanctuary for birdwatching, where you might see Partridges, peacocks, Orioles or Jungle Fowl. We shall also visit the famous Jakhoo Temple, where a 108ft statue of the monkey-god Hanuman can be seen above the treetops on Shimla's highest hilltop. Hundreds of rhesus macaques loiter around here hoping for gifts of food from visitors. You will have time to wander the streets or cap off the day with some fine mountain tea at the Indian Coffee House. Late in the afternoon, we transfer back to the hotel for dinner.

*Overnight: Clarkes Hotel, Shimla (B, L, D)*

### Day 11 • Thursday 16 February: SHIMLA - DELHI

This morning we bid adieu to the queen of the hills and transfer to the station to board our private carriages on the train back down the mountain. The return journey offers a different perspective on the landscape through pine forests and past charming Victorian-style railway stations. At Barog, about halfway back down the mountain, we transfer to our private cars to continue the journey to Kalka and the connection to our fast 'Shatabdi' train to Delhi.

Later in the evening, we arrive in the Indian capital, a treasure trove of ancient culture and history with remnants of lost empires. On the way in we stop at the exquisite Sikh Temple, called the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, where more than 10,000 people are fed each day. We then check into our hotel, The Imperial, the most iconic hotel in New Delhi and provides a grand finish to our adventure. It was built in 1931 by Bromfield, an associate of Sir Edwin Lutyens, and inaugurated in 1936 by Lord Willingdon. The Imperial is the perfect blend of Victorian décor and Art Deco, allowing guests to travel back in time to the days of the British Raj.

*Overnight: The Imperial Hotel, Delhi (B, L)*

### Day 12 • Friday 17 February: DELHI

Today we will explore the intricate, bustling streets of Old Delhi, visit the Jama Masjid Mosque, one of Asia's largest mosques, and experience an exhilarating rickshaw ride through the old by-lanes of this fascinating city-within-a-city. We will visit Red fort, yet another example of the finest Mughal architecture, and stop at Raj Ghat, a memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. We will also visit the National Rail Museum, which has a wide collection of royal carriages, locomotives, and old trains of a bygone era. It also has the Vice Regal Dining Car, the luxury Prince of Wales Saloon, Maharaja of Baroda's Saloon and Maharaja of Mysore's Saloon.

Tonight, we enjoy a grand farewell dinner at the hotel in the company of our fellow travellers and tour leader.

*Overnight: The Imperial Hotel, Delhi (B, D)*

### Day 13 • Saturday 18 February: DELHI - DEPART

Today is the last day of our journey, and to bid farewell to India and its railways. We will take a six-hour journey onboard the famous Fairy Queen. It is the oldest working steam locomotive in the world, which made its maiden journey in the year 1855 for the erstwhile East Indian Railway. We will be transferred to Delhi International airport to board the flight back home. (B, L)

## OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF ROYAL RAJASTHAN AND THE WONDERS OF INDIA'S CELEBRATED MUGHAL ERA, INCLUDING THE TAJ MAHAL

### Day 13 • Saturday 18 February: DELHI - JAIPUR

Continue by coach from Alwar to Jaipur, the enthralling and charming city also known as The "Pink City". Jaipur has retained its flair for royal celebration: the entire city was painted pink in 1876 to welcome the Prince of Wales (it was refreshed to celebrate the visit of Queen Elizabeth II and, later, Diana, Princess of Wales.)

*Overnight: Jai Mahal Palace, Jaipur (B)*

### Day 14 • Sunday 19 February: JAIPUR

Within the pink walls of Jaipur, we will find lively bazaars, camel carts, cows and rickshaw drivers. There is much to see and do, including a visit to the Amber Fort, the City Palace and the Observatory. As well as the numerous historical sights.

*Overnight: Jai Mahal Palace, Jaipur (B, L)*

### Day 15 • Monday 20 February: JAIPUR - AGRA

We continue to Agra, the home of one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the immortal Taj Mahal, which was built in 1653 by the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, as a monument of love to his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. As well as the spectacular Taj Mahal, we will also visit Agra Fort where Shah Jahan was imprisoned after being overthrown by his son.

*Overnight: Taj Convention, Agra (B)*

### Day 16 Tuesday 21 February: AGRA - DELHI - DEPARTURES

We will be transferred to Delhi International Airport for our flight home. (B)



## WHAT'S **INCLUDED**

- 12 nights' accommodation in comfortable, centrally located hotels and one sleeper train
- Daily breakfast, 8 lunches and 10 dinners
- Drinks included with welcome and farewell dinners
- All transfers and tours
- All excursions and entrance fees to attractions, as listed in the itinerary
- Domestic Flight (Economy Class) Bagdogra-Delhi and Shimla-Delhi with 15 Kilo luggage allowance per flight
- Tipping and gratuities
- English Speaking local guide
- Bottled water throughout

## WHAT WE **DON'T INCLUDE**

- Early Check-in or check-out
- International flights
- Camera & Video permits where required
- Indian Visas
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Meals and services not mentioned in the itinerary
- All other personal expenses such as drinks, phone calls, laundry services, and camera fees where applicable
- Luggage allowance on domestic flights over 15 Kilos
- Excursions listed as optional and extra in the brochure

## FITNESS **RATING**

### Two 'Locos'

The most common grading for our tours. Two loco itineraries offer many activities that require a little extra fitness – walking on uneven ground, climbing hills to enter towns or historic sites, walks of 1-3 kilometres as well as getting on and off transport. You need to have good mobility and aerobic fitness and be able to manage your own luggage.

## EXTENSION **INCLUSIONS**

- 3 nights' accommodation in comfortable, centrally located hotels
- Daily breakfast, 1 lunch
- All transfers and tours by air-conditioned coach
- All excursions and entrance fees to attractions, as listed in the itinerary
- Tipping and gratuities
- English Speaking local guide
- Bottled water throughout

## EXTENSION **EXCLUSIONS**

- Early Check-in or check-out
- International flights
- Camera & Video permits where required
- Meals and services not mentioned in the itinerary
- All other personal expenses such as drinks, phone calls, laundry services, and camera fees where applicable



Viceroy Palace in Shimla

## SOME PLACES **YOU'LL STAY**

Hand-picked hotels and resorts based on location, customer feedback, value and atmosphere.

*Please Note: Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.*



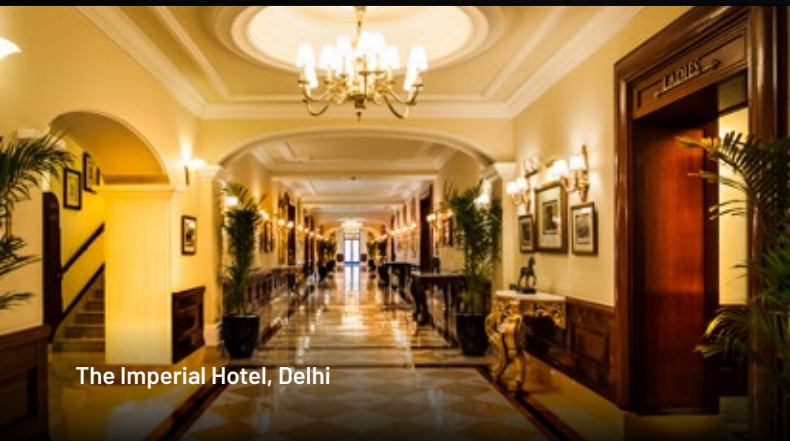
The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata



Taj, Chandigarh



Cochrane Place, Kurseong



The Imperial Hotel, Delhi

## **PRICE**

Per person twin share .....\$9,875  
Single supplement ..... \$2,285  
Deposit (per person) ..... \$1000 at time of booking  
Final payment due by ..... 23 November 2022

## EXTENSION **PRICE**

Per person twin share ..... \$1,685  
Single supplement ..... \$700

### SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

We have suggested flights for this itinerary depending on your departure point from Australia, any preferred stopovers en-route and/or your planned pre- and post-tour activities. We can also investigate your preferred airline and offer you a solution based on connection times and prices. Contact 1300 800 977 to discuss your options.

### HOW TO BOOK

Download a booking form from our website and follow the easy steps to getting on board. Alternatively, contact us on 1300 800 977 or info@railwayadventures.com if you'd prefer a form be sent to you. Complete the form and submit it, along with your \$1000 pp deposit to secure your place on the tour.

### DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

We endeavour to have all the details of our tours correct at the time of printing. However, sometimes factors beyond our control may affect the final inclusions and prices. These factors may include, but not be limited to; significant fluctuations in currency exchange rates, individual hotel/restaurant decisions that may affect bookings; weather events forcing a change of itinerary; unexpected trackwork on rail lines, unexpected closure of site attractions and so forth. Therefore, items mentioned in the brochure such as quoted prices, hotels and inclusions are subject to change. If a change is imposed on us, we will endeavour to ensure the substitute is of the same quality that you've paid for.

### TOUR PACE / LEVEL OF FITNESS:

Our itineraries are designed to make the most of each destination, so a reasonable amount of activity is built into most days, which is why we call them adventures. Our philosophy is to offer you the best experience possible, while leaving you, our guest, the flexibility to pace yourself and choose how much or how little you want to do. Each Railway Adventures tour incorporates periods of free time for your own exploration and relaxation.

While you don't need to be a 'gym junky', a reasonable level of fitness is required for most of our tours. The ability to manage your own luggage, get on and off all manner of trains and coaches, walk for extended periods, stand comfortably, and climb steps and stairs will ensure you get the maximum enjoyment from your adventure.

### ADDITIONAL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

In addition to assisting with flight suggestions and bookings, we can also give you some ideas of what you could do before and after your Railway Adventure.

We can also organise your all-important Travel Insurance for you. Call our office on 1300 800 977 if you would like to discuss options.

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For more information on factors such as travel insurance requirements, fitness levels, fees and charges, tour cancellations, payment schedules and so on, please refer to our Terms and Conditions, which accompany the booking form. They can also be found on our website.

Darjeeling Train climbing to Kurseong



**RAILWAY  
ADVENTURES**

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## THE RAILWAY ADVENTURES **STORY**

Railway Adventures was launched in 2012 by well-known Australian TV personality and self-confessed rail fan, Scott McGregor. A lifelong passion for travel has taken Scott to scores of countries and his preference for rail has seen him exploring many of the world's great train journeys, confirming his belief that the most relaxing, romantic and engaging way to see a country is by rail. He even has his own life-sized, fully restored opulent train accommodation atop the Great Dividing Range near Mudgee, offering guests a rare and special bush retreat experience.

Since 2012 Railway Adventures has thrilled and delighted more than 1200 travellers on over 100 tours from Sweden to Sri Lanka, Tasmania to Transylvania, Britain to Burma, Venice to Vietnam and all manner of shorter adventures in our own wonderful country. Scott's numerous rail-themed TV documentaries, his ongoing involvement in rail heritage and his extensive connections with private train owners around the world, guarantee that every Railway Adventures tour is exclusive, entertaining and authentic. 06 July 2022.

Your travel agent