



West Bengal & Darjeeling

Includes ➔

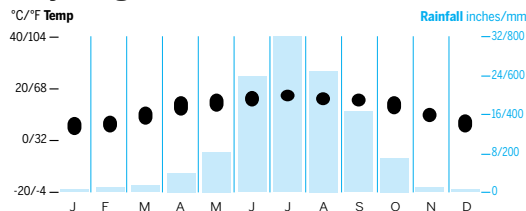
Sunderbans Tiger Reserve	491
Mandarmani	492
Up the Hooghly	492
Bishnupur	493
Shantiniketan	493
Nabadwip & Mayapur	495
Murshidabad & Berhampore	495
Siliguri & New Jalpaiguri	495
Jaldhapa Wildlife Sanctuary	498
Kurseong	499
Darjeeling	500
Singalila Ridge Trek	512
Kalimpong	514

Why Go?

A sliver of fertile land running from the tea-draped Himalayan foothills to the sultry mangroves of the Bay of Bengal, West Bengal offers a remarkable range of destinations and experiences to find within a single state. In the tropical southern areas, the sea-washed hamlet of Mandarmani vies for attention with Bishnupur's ornate terracotta-tiled Hindu temples and palaces. The striped Bengal tiger stealthily swims through muddy rivulets in the Sunderbans, while a bunch of European-style ghost towns line the banks of the Hooghly (Ganges) further upstream as reminders of the state's maritime heyday. In the cool northern hills, the toy train chugs its way up to the charming British-era hill station of Darjeeling, revered for its ringside views of massive Khangchendzonga. There's also a vibrant art scene, delectable cuisine and a genuinely hospitable population where friends are easy to make and hard to lose.

When to Go

Darjeeling



Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Elgin (p507)
- ➔ Holumba Haven (p517)
- ➔ Vedic Village (p493)

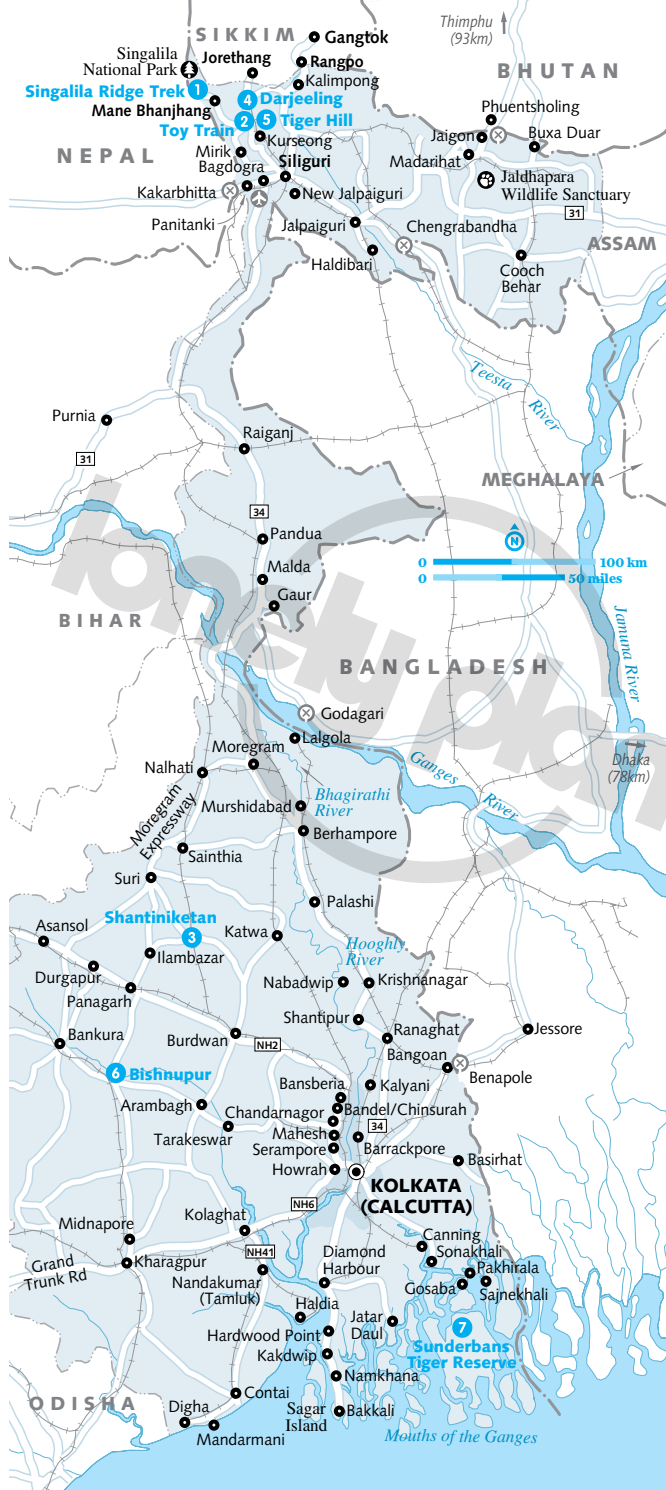
Best Places for a Cuppa

- ➔ Windamere Hotel (p507)
- ➔ Glenary's (p509)
- ➔ Cochrane Place (p500)

Oct–Dec & Mar–May Best for hill views, trekking and spring blooms up north.

Oct–Mar Best time for avoiding the heat on the lower southern plains.

Jan Ideal for navigating the dense mangrove forests of the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve.



West Bengal Highlights

- 1 Enjoying 360-degree mountain views over breakfast at hilltop lodges on the **Singalila Ridge Trek** (p513)
- 2 Riding the steam-driven **toy train** (p511) as it puffs and pants its way between the tea towns of Kurseong and Darjeeling
- 3 Exploring rural wonders and getting arty on a visit to the university town of **Shantiniketan** (p493)
- 4 Visiting a tea estate, sipping a delicate local brew and enjoying fantastic mountain views from the historic hill station of **Darjeeling** (p500)
- 5 Watching dawn break over Khangchendzonga, the world's third-highest peak, from **Tiger Hill** (p501)
- 6 Admiring intricate scenes from the Hindu epics carved on the medieval terracotta temples of **Bishnupur** (p493)
- 7 Cruising the river channels of the **Sunderbans** (p491) through the world's most extensive mangrove forest, to spot darting kingfishers, spotted deer and the elusive Royal Bengal tiger