



West Bengal & Darjeeling

Includes ➔

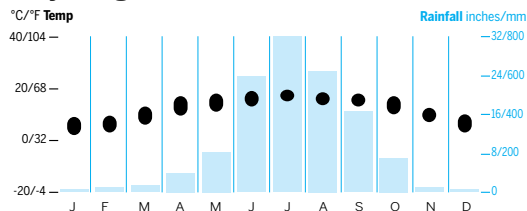
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Why Go?

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 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 ghost towns line the banks of the Hooghly (a branch of the Ganges) further upstream as reminders of the state's maritime heyday. In the cool northern hills, the 'toy train' chugs its way up the charming British-era hill station of Darjeeling, revered for its ringside views of massive Khangchendzonga. West Bengal also boasts a vibrant art scene, delectable cuisine and a genuinely hospitable population.

When to Go

Darjeeling



Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Glenary's (p503)
- ➔ Cochrane Place (p496)
- ➔ Amber (p493)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Dekeling Hotel (p502)
- ➔ Holumba Haven (p512)
- ➔ Vedic Village (p489)

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

Mar–May & Oct–Dec Best for hill views, trekking and spring blooms of the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve.

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

West Bengal & Darjeeling Highlights

1 Singalila Ridge Trek (p508) Enjoying 360-degree mountain views over breakfast at hilltop lodges on this ridge-line walk.

2 Toy train (p507) Riding the tiny colonial-era steam-driven train as it puffs and pants its way between the tea towns of Kurseong and Darjeeling.

3 Shantiniketan (p488) Exploring rural wonders and getting arty on a visit to this university town.

4 Darjeeling (p497) Visiting a tea estate, sipping a delicate local brew and enjoying fantastic mountain views from this historic hill station.

5 Bishnupur (p488) Admiring intricate scenes from the Hindu epics carved on the many medieval terracotta temples.

6 Sunderbans (p486) Cruising the river channels of the world's most extensive mangrove forest, to spot darting kingfishers, spotted deer and the elusive Royal Bengal tiger.

