

**My City**  
**My Heritage**

Gang  
tok

 Trail

# Village Hopping From the Last to the First Capital

 278km apx

 Gangtok

Photos by Martin Sada, Abhishek Anil, Sristi Sharma, and  
Wikimedia Commons.

Illustration by Jisha Unnikrishnan.

**Beginning in Gangtok, the present and last capital of the former Himalayan kingdom, and moving gradually toward Yuksom, the first capital established in 1642, this village hopping trail traces the political, spiritual, and cultural evolution of Sikkim.**

As you travel, the shift is not only geographical but historical. Urban streets give way to tea slopes, forest villages, sacred lakes, monasteries, and agrarian settlements. Each place reveals a different layer of Sikkim, shaped by the beliefs and cosmologies of the people who inhabited this region and practices that these villages have endured over time.

This trail is designed as open and flexible rather than a fixed tour. It is built around locally run homestays and small community spaces that allow travellers to engage directly with people, food, architecture, landscape, and histories—inviting you to move slowly, stay longer where you feel connected, and experience Sikkim not as a series of sights, but as a living, layered mountain culture.

## 1 Gangtok

Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, was the last seat of the Chogyal monarchy before the kingdom merged with India in 1975. Once a small settlement along Indo-Tibetan trade routes, it grew into the political and cultural centre of the state. The Tsuklakhang Royal Chapel connects visitors to Sikkim's royal



legacy, while the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology offers insight into Tibetan Buddhist scholarship. Travellers can explore Lall Bazaar and Enchey Gumpa to observe spiritual spaces and local produce, visit handicraft and handloom centres, walk the monastery circuit, and experience the town's evolving café culture. A stay of two nights allows visitors to understand how Sikkim transitioned from a sacred kingdom to a modern Himalayan state.

**Stay Suggestions: Tag Along Hostels**

## 2 Temi Tea Garden

Established in 1969, Temi Tea Garden is the only tea estate in Sikkim, reflecting a shift from subsistence farming to organised, organic tea cultivation that now contributes to Sikkim's global identity. Temi offers a visual and experiential contrast to Gangtok's urban setting, with expansive green hills, colonial-era bungalows, and a working tea economy.



Visitors can walk through tea gardens, understand the process of plucking and processing, interact with estate workers, and enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding mountains. A one-night stay in or around the estate allows travellers to observe how landscape, labour, and livelihood shape this region before continuing deeper into rural Sikkim.

**Stay Suggestions: Temi Kothi Homestay**

### 3 Yangang



Yangang is a quiet settlement in South Sikkim: open landscapes and paddy fields, against views of the sacred Bhaleydhunga peak, reflect everyday agrarian life shaped by farming, forest access, and small monastic communities. Travellers can walk through paddy fields and cardamom plantations, visit nearby monasteries, explore forest trails and waterfalls, and spend time understanding seasonal farming cycles. Conversations with local families reveal how migration, education, and sustainability are reshaping village life today.

A stay of one to two nights allows visitors to experience home-cooked meals, quiet evenings, and the slower rhythm that

defines South Sikkim before continuing towards Ravangla.

**Stay Suggestions: Dhuni Homestay**

### 4 Ravangla

Ravangla sits at a higher elevation in South Sikkim and serves as an important cultural and spiritual centre. It is best known for the Buddha Park, built to commemorate the 2550th birth anniversary of the Buddha, and for its proximity to Ralang Monastery, a key centre of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

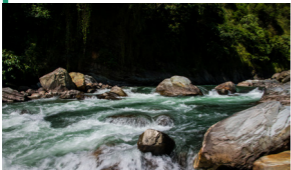
Monasteries overlook valleys, prayer flags line forest paths, and mountain views shape daily life. Visitors can explore Buddha Park, visit monasteries, take short forest walks, and watch the sunrise over Khangchendzonga.

**Stay Suggestions: Selep Homestay**



## 5 Borong

Borong is a small and peaceful village in South Sikkim, known for its wide views of Mount Khangchendzonga and natural hot springs. Less commercial than nearby towns, Borong opens up into terraced fields, forest trails, and distant snow peaks.



The hot springs near Borong are believed to have healing properties and attract visitors seeking therapeutic baths, especially during cooler months. The village also serves as a base for short forest walks, birdwatching, and gentle exploration of surrounding hamlets.

A stay of one night in a local homestay is ideal to experience sunrise views of Khangchendzonga before moving toward Tashiding.

**Stay Suggestions: Himalayan View Homestay**

## 6 Tashiding

Tashiding is one of the most sacred Buddhist sites in Sikkim, perched on a hill between the Rathong and Rangeet rivers. It is home to the revered Tashiding Monastery, established in the seventeenth-century and closely associated with the Bhumchu festival, an annual ritual where a sacred vase of water is opened to predict the fortunes of the



coming year. Historically, Tashiding played an important role for the Sikkimese kingdom, and remains a critical pilgrimage site. The hilltop is lined with prayer flags and chortens, including the Thongwa Rangdol stupa, believed to cleanse one's sins upon sight.

Travelers can visit the monastery, learn about the Bhumchu ceremony, walk through the quiet forested paths around the hill, buy local organic incense, and observe the meeting of rivers below. A stay of one night in a simple homestay nearby is recommended before continuing toward Yuksom, the first capital of Sikkim.

**Stay Suggestions: Rabney Residency or Sanu Homestay**

## 7 Yuksom

Yuksom was the first capital of Sikkim, where the first Chogyal was crowned in 1642 at the Norbugang Coronation Throne, marking the formal establishment of the Yuksom as the first capital of Sikkim, where the first Chogyal was crowned in 1642 at the Norbugang Coronation Throne, marking the formal establishment of the Sikkimese kingdom under the guidance of three revered lamas. Yuksom remains a symbolic starting point of Sikkim's political and spiritual history.

Also home to Dubdi Monastery, considered the oldest monastery in Sikkim, Yuksom is the gateway to the Khangchendzonga National Park and several important trekking routes.

Travelers can visit the coronation site, walk to Dubdi Monastery, explore traditional village homes, and learn about the origins of the Chogyal dynasty. A stay of two nights is recommended in Yuksom, which allows visitors to reflect on the beginnings of the kingdom after tracing its later developments through Gangtok and Tashiding.

**Stay Suggestions: Yak homestay, Limboo Homestay**



## 8 Khecheopalri Lake

Khecheopalri Lake is one of the most sacred natural sites in Sikkim, revered by both Buddhists and Hindus. According to local belief, the lake fulfills wishes; it is said that even leaves that fall on its surface are swiftly carried away by birds to keep the water pure. Nearby monasteries and small villages continue to maintain the ritual and ecological sanctity of the site.

Travelers can spend time by the lake, walk through surrounding



forest paths, interact with local families, and learn about the belief systems that connect Buddhist and indigenous traditions. A stay of one night in a nearby homestay allows for early morning and evening visits when the lake is at its most peaceful.

**Stay Suggestions: Khecheopalri Sanctuary Homestay**

## 9 Bermiok

Bermiok is a quiet agrarian village in West Sikkim, historically associated with the Subba (Limbu) community. The Subbas were among the early settlers in these mid-hill landscapes and played an important role in shaping local agricultural systems, customary governance, and clan-based social structures. During the monarchical period, Subbas often functioned as village heads and intermediaries within the Chogyal administration.

The landscape reflects this history of settlement and cultivation with terraced fields, cardamom plantations, millet farming, and forest-edge homes adapted to mountain ecology. Cultural life remains rooted in oral traditions,



seasonal agricultural rhythms, and harvest festivals such as Chasok Tangnam, which honours land and ancestral spirits.

Travelers can walk through farmlands and village trails, learn about traditional agricultural practices, and enjoy expansive views of the Khangchendzonga range on clear days. Bermiok offers a grounding conclusion to the trail, shifting focus from royal capitals and monasteries to indigenous agrarian roots and lived community history.

**Stay Suggestions: Daara Pari Homestay**

### Please Note:

- This is a self-guided itinerary, best completed over 12 to 16 days, with one or two nights in each place.
- Ensure that stays are booked well in advance.
- Shared cabs are available from each location. Connect with homestay or hostel hosts to help arrange them.
- Approach the journey with an open mind, set realistic expectations about the stay, food, and destination, respect local culture and traditions, and take time to immerse in everyday local life and experiences.
- Speak to hosts and follow their recommendations to make the most of each place.
- If any issues arise, feedback should be shared directly with hosts in a kind and considerate manner so they can improve. Avoid leaving negative reviews online without first speaking to them.
- Support local communities by buying handmade products and local produce from villages.
- Travel responsibly: carry a reusable water bottle, minimize plastic use, and dispose of waste properly without littering.
- Follow all local rules and guidelines, if any.



### Tag Along

A Sikkim-based travel initiative focused on community-driven, responsible tourism. Through curated local experiences and pioneering ventures such as the Nathu La cycling route, it works closely with communities to promote meaningful engagement with the region's culture and landscape.

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