ODYSSEY TRAVELLER

Tour of Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Bhutan

Recommended reading for your journey

01

A Field Guide to Happiness: What I Learned in Bhutan about Living, Loving, and Waking Up

Linda Leaming

"In the West, we have everything we could possibly need or want except for peace of mind". So writes Linda Leaming, a harried American who traveled from Nashville, Tennessee, to the rugged Himalayan nation of Bhutan sometimes called the happiest place on Earth to teach English and unlearn her politicized and polarized, energetic and impatient way of life. "In Bhutan if I have three things to do in a week, it s considered busy. In the U.S., I have at least three things to do between breakfast and lunch". After losing her luggage immediately upon arrival, Leaming realized that she also had emotional baggage a tendency toward inaction, a touch of self-absorption, and a hundred other trite, stupid, embarrassing, and inconsequential things that needed to get lost as well. Pack up ideas and feelings that tie you down and send you lead-footed down the wrong path. Put them in a metaphorical suitcase and sling it over a metaphorical bridge in your mind. Let the river take them away. Forced by circumstance and her rustic surroundings to embrace a simplified life, Leaming made room for more useful beliefs. The thin air and hard climbs of her mountainous commute put her deeply in touch with her breath, helping her find focus and appreciation. The archaic, glacially paced bureaucracy of a Bhutanese bank taught her to go with the flow and take up knitting. The ancient ritual of drinking tea brought tranquility, friendship, and, eventually, a husband. Each day, and each adventure, in her adopted home brought new insights and understandings to take back to frantic America, where she now practices the art of simulating Bhutan. This collection of stories, impressions, and suggestions is a little nudge, a push, a leg up into the rarefied air of paradise of bright sunlight and beautiful views.

02

The History of Bhutan

Karma Phuntsho

In recent years, the remote kingdom of Bhutan has increasingly attracted the attention of the world. In 2008, it emerged as the world s youngest democracy and in the same year crowned the world s youngest monarch. This was followed by the new King s colourful wedding in 2011. Today, it continues to enchant the rest of the world with its policy of Gross National Happiness and has become a very popular destination for travel. But, despite its growing popularity and the rising scholarly interest in

the country, Bhutan remains one of the most poorly studied places on earth. Karma Phuntsho s The History of Bhutan is the first-ever attempt to cover the entire history of Bhutan in some detail in English, combining both traditional perspectives and modern academic analysis. Written by a leading expert on the country, the book tells the story of Bhutan in a narrative style interspersed with some analytical and topical discussion, and numerous citations and translations from earlier writings. It is primarily a historical account, but it also includes substantive discussions of Bhutan s geography, culture and society to give the readers an incisive introduction to the country.

03

Samu Shamu: The Sonam Stories: Narratives of Childhood in Bhutan

Suzie Sims-Fletcher

On a remote campus in the Black Mountains of the Himalayas, students at the Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, were asked to recall stories of their childhoods. Suzie Sims-Fletcher, their English lopen, taught them how to move from the oral tradition in Dzonghka to written composition in English. These selected tales are at once uniquely provincial yet poignantly universal. The collection offers striking memories of family and community, learning and growth, illness and death, tradition and celebration. An adaptable lesson guide to the story project (ESL, listening skills, writing), glossary of Dzongkha words and phrases, as well as vibrant full color photos of Druk Yul, Land of the Thunder Dragon, round out the 156 pages. Whether you are a tourist, teacher, or culture collector, Samu-Shamu: The Sonam Stories, captures the mist and earth of this magical kingdom in the sky.

04

The Dragon s Voice: How Modern Media Found Bhutan

Bunty Avieson

This is a fascinating account of ancient culture colliding with modern media. Tucked between Tibet and India in the Himalayas, the kingdom of Bhutan is one of the most isolated and beautiful countries in the world. In The Dragon s Voice, Australian journalist Bunty Avieson provides a glimpse of life beyond the country s exotic exterior. As a consultant to local newspaper Bhutan Observer, she admires the paper s strong social conscience, but finds her expectations challenged in a country where spirituality and personal happiness are prioritized over work. Avieson also witnesses the tensions that arise as a Buddhist kingdom makes the transition to democracy. The courtship ritual of night-hunting and the nation s first public demonstration become controversial news items, while journalists must overcome traditional social hierarchies to keep politicians accountable. With a unique blend of memoir and reportage, The Dragon s Voice is both a deeply personal story and a vivid portrait of a nation on the cusp of revolutionary change.

05

Joanna Lumley in the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon

Joanna Lumley

In 1931 Joanna Lumley's grandparents travelled to the remote Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan to invest King Jigme Wangchuk as a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire. They journeyed for three-and-a-half months through dense jungles and across mountain passes and uncharted plains, taking with them a film camera. In this book, their granddaughter records her thoughts and impressions of Bhutan as she follows in their footsteps, trekking across the country from west to east, on foot and on ponies. The book includes photographs from her trip, archive pictures from her grandparents' album, drawings by Lumley herself, and extracts from her own journal and her grandmother's diary. It is peppered with recipes, remedies, customs and, all through, a vein of personal family history and the author's own thoughts and observations.

06

Darjeeling: A History of the World s Greatest Tea

Jeff Koehler

Darjeeling's tea bushes stretch across a picturesque landscape steeped in religious, sacred and mythical history. Planted at high elevation in the heart of the Eastern Himalayas, in an area of northern India bound by Nepal to the west, Bhutan to the east and Sikkim to the north, the rows of brilliant green, waist-high shrubs that coat the steep slopes and valleys around this Victorian 'hill town' produce only a fraction of the world's tea, and less than one per cent of India's total. Yet the tea from this limited crop, with its characteristic bright, amber-coloured brew and muscatel flavours delicate and flowery, with hints of apricots and peaches is generally considered the best on the globe. This is the story of how Darjeeling developed its prodigious tea industry under Imperial British rule and eventually came to produce some of the highest-quality leaves in the world. It is a fascinating portrait of the region from the days of the Raj to that of the 'voodoo farmers' of the present day, who get world-record prices for their fine teas, all set against the backdrop of the looming Himalayas and drenching monsoons. It is a story rich in intrigue and empire, full of adventurers and unlikely successes in culture and religion, ecology and terroir, and one that began with one of the most audacious acts of corporate smuggling in history. It is also the tale of how the industry had spiralled into decline by the end of the twentieth century, and how this paradisiacal spot in the high Himalayas seethes with union unrest and a violent struggle for independent statehood. It is on the front line against the devastating effects of climate change and decades of harmful farming practices, a war that is being fought in some tea gardens and, astonishingly, won using radical methods.

07

Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environments

Middleton (Editor), Shneiderman (Editor)

Darjeeling occupies a special place in the South Asian imaginary. With its Himalayan vistas, lush tea gardens, and brisk mountain air, Darjeeling was the consummate colonial hill-station. The romance with the "queen of the hills" lives on, as thousands of tourists (domestic and international) annually flock to the hills to taste its world-renowned tea, soak up the colonial nostalgia, and glimpse mighty Mount Kanchenjunga. Darjeeling's fame has now gone global and its legacy continues to fuel Hollywood and Bollywood fantasies. But this is only part of Darjeeling's story. Darjeeling Reconsidered provocatively rethinks Darjeeling's legendary status in the postcolonial imagination. Mobilizing diverse disciplinary approaches from the social sciences and humanities, this definitive collection of essays sheds fresh light on the region's past and offers critical insight into the issues facing its people today. The historical analyses break with hackneyed colonial accounts to provide alternative readings of systems of governance, labour, and migration that shaped Darjeeling. The ethnographic chapters present cutting-edge accounts of dynamics that define life in 21st century Darjeeling: among them the realpolitik of subnationalism; Fair Trade tea; indigenous struggle; gendered inequality; ecological transformation; and resource scarcity. Through these eye-opening perspectives, Darjeeling Reconsidered figures Darjeeling as a vital site for South Asian and Postcolonial Studies-and calls for a timely re-examination of the legend and hard-realities of this oft-romanticized region and its people. The book seeks a place on the shelves of postcolonial theorists, on the syllabi of undergraduate and graduate courses on South Asia, and in the rucksacks of intellectually curious visitors from all over the world to Darjeeling.

08

Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom

Andrew Duff

A remarkable piece of detective work . . . In addition to fascinating human stories, the book is a very valuable addition to how the Cold War played out in South Asia, and to the history of the foreign policies of China, India and the US . . . exceptionally well-written and compelling to read.' - Michael Burleigh, author of Small Wars, Faraway Places 'The last days of a Himalayan kingdom presented in glorious Technicolor. This is a superbly researched work and packed full of extraordinary characters straight out of a James Bond novel, with appearances from Indira Gandhi, Henry Kissinger, Zhou Enlai and Chairman Mao . . . Has great relevance to today's Asia; anyone with an interest in India and China's complex relationship should read this enthralling book.' - Prajwal Parajuly, author of The Gurkha's Daughter and Land Where I Flee This is the true story of Sikkim, a tiny Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas that survived the end of the British Empire only to be annexed by India in 1975. It tells the remarkable tale of Thondup Namgyal, the last King of Sikkim, and his American wife, Hope Cooke, thrust unwittingly into the spotlight as they sought support for Sikkim's independence after their 'fairytale' wedding in 1963. As tensions between India and China spilled over into war in the Himalayas, Sikkim became a pawn in the Cold War in Asia during the

1960s and 1970s. Rumours circulated that Hope was a CIA spy. Meanwhile, a shadowy Scottish adventuress, the Kazini of Chakung, married to Sikkim's leading political figure, coordinated opposition to the Palace. As the world's major powers jostled for regional supremacy during the early 1970s Sikkim and its ruling family never stood a chance. On the eve of declaring an Emergency across India, Indira Gandhi outwitted everyone to bring down the curtain on the 300-year-old Namgyal dynasty. Based on interviews and archive research, as well as a retracing of a journey the author's grandfather made in 1922, this is a thrilling, romantic and informative glimpse of a real life Shangri-La.

09

The World of Tibetan Buddhism: An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice

Dalai Lama

With characteristic humility, His Holiness the Dalai Lama begins this landmark survey of the entire Buddhist path by saying, "I think an overview of Tibetan Buddhism for the purpose of providing a comprehensive framework of the path may prove helpful in deepening your understanding and practice." In this book, the Dalai Lama delivers a presentation that is both concise and profound, accessible and engaging. As readers explore Tibetan Buddhism more fully than ever before, they will find in His Holiness a great friend and authority.

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