

Soul Seekers

COMMENCE ON A TRIP TO A FARAWAY LAND, SOMEWHERE SERENE AND ENCLOSED IN NATURE'S GOODNESS THAT WILL MAKE THOSE WRINKLES DISAPPEAR, GOAD YOU TO EXPERIENCE NEW ADVENTURES AND INDUCE PEACE OF MIND. **RHEA TONY** ACTS AS A TOUR GUIDE FOR THOSE LOOKING TO FATHOM THEIR SOULS WHILST WANDERING AROUND THE COUNTRY. HERE'S THE TRAVEL CHECKLIST OF PANORAMIC SIGHTS AND SURROUNDINGS, LITERALLY IN ALL THE FOUR MAJOR DIRECTIONS OF THE COMPASS!



Kalimpong

West Bengal

Kalimpong is a sleepy little town situated at an altitude of 1,250 m above sea level in the northeastern state of West Bengal. It is only 50 km away from Darjeeling and you can always make a pit stop at Phuntsholing across the Bhutan border sans visa! With its fair share of churches and monasteries, surrounding waterfalls, parks and nature reserves, Kalimpong is a bustling town with four main languages spoken—English, Hindi, Nepali and Bengali. It is a town that contributes to almost 80 per cent of gladioli flowers in India. The



town is packed with cacti, orchids and other flowers too, and is known for its annual flower festival in October.

THINGS TO DO

Hiking & Waterfalls

Hiking and trail walks will guide you through forests and the countryside replete with scenic waterfalls. On this trail, you will come across Changey Falls, the famous 3-step waterfall between Tiffin Dhara and Ghanti Dhara. At 300 m, it is considered the highest-altitude waterfall in North Bengal, and is home to a variety of animals and birds.

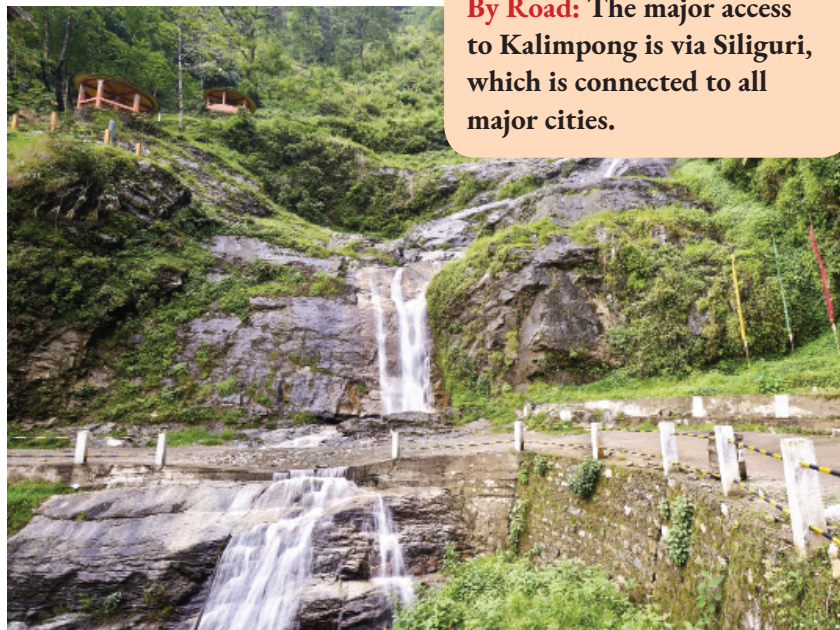


White-water Rafting

White-water rafting on the river Teesta and Rangeet (Tribeni) makes for an enchanting experiencing with the surrounding hills and the rich flora and fauna for company.

Neora National Park

Founded in 1986, it is considered to be one of the wealthiest biological zones at the base of the Himalayas as it is home to a large variety of animals and birds. Sightings of the golden-headed black finch, blind snake and king cobra in their natural habitat are commonplace. ■



HOW TO REACH

By Air: The nearest airport to Kalimpong is Bagdogra. There are direct flight connections with Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Guwahati.

By Train: The two closest railway stations are Siliguri and New Jalpaiguri. These stations are directly connected with Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati, Varanasi and other major cities of India.

By Road: The major access to Kalimpong is via Siliguri, which is connected to all major cities.



Tarkarli Maharashtra

Tarkarli is located in the Malvan taluka of Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra, and is full with several white sand beaches boasting clear waters, and green vegetation making it a tropical paradise. The village is serene, engulfed in nature and is a peace haven. Known to be a protected zone for female turtles—don't be surprised if you come across them lazing on the beach. Tarkarli also boasts of scenic backwaters that lets you enjoy the cool breeze via boathouse rides down the Tarkarli River. Lazing around in hammocks at one of the many properties dotting the little village and gorging on delicious cuisine are an added bonus.

THINGS TO DO

Scuba-diving & Snorkelling

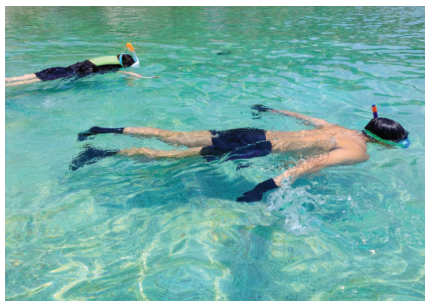
Although there are several beautiful places in India where you can go scuba-diving, Tarkarli is definitely among the best. Coral reefs, exotic fishes and dolphins add to the charm of the scuba-diving experience. Can't swim? Don't fret, these clear and calm waters are perfect even for beginners and juvenile explorers.

Water Sports

Tsunami island is known not just for its unique name but also for the variety of water sports—jet ski, bumper boats, parasailing, kayaking, etc. Visit when it's high tide and you will find the small island partially submerged in knee-deep water.

Beaches

White sand beaches will ensure you take long walks barefoot in clear waters and fresh air. Kolamb, Tarkarli, Tsunami, Devbagh, Bhogave and Nivati are just some of the beaches around the area you should be seeing. You can even swim with dolphins or catch a glimpse of them in the deep sea on a boat ride off the silvery sands of Bhogave beach. ■



HOW TO REACH

By Air: The nearest airport is Dabolim, Goa. From Dabolim airport, you will need to hire a taxi, State Transport buses or book a private car to Tarkarli.

By Rail: Trains are available till Kudal railway station which is 50 km away from Malvan city; an additional 6 km will take you to Tarkarli Beach. Hail an autorickshaw to Tarkarli from Kudal.

By Road: You can drive to Tarkali from Mumbai (about 550 km) taking the NH17 or NH4 route via Mumbai-Pune Express Highway. State Transport buses from Parel, Mumbai Central, Thane and Borivali also ply regularly to Malvan; from here you can hail an autorickshaw to Tarkarli.



Jibhi

Himachal Pradesh

Situated in the Banjar Valley of Himachal Pradesh, Jibhi is a scenic and lazy village on the banks of the gurgling Tirthan, a tributary of the Beas River. Far from the madding crowd, all you have for company here are the sounds of the gushing waters of the river and bird songs that fill the surrounding lush green pine and cedar forests. Since this is pretty much a town lost in time, there is little to do here except soak in its quiet serenity. For those looking for adventure, hiking along the defined tracks across forests and hills is common.

THINGS TO DO

Jibhi Waterfalls

Experience the misty, refreshing waterfall with a rare rainbow shadow sighting at



the Jibhi waterfalls, less than a kilometre from the village.

Fishing

In the pristine waters of Tirthan River, you can fish for rainbow trout in abundance as long as you have the patience (and luck) for it. All you need is a fishing permit which you can get for a pittance from the local authorities.

Jalori Pass

Located in Kullu Valley, you have to pass the Jalori Valley to reach Jibhi. The steep drive through cloud-covered mountains at 10,500 ft above sea level makes for a spectacular experience—and is worth its while. ■



HOW TO REACH

By Air: The nearest airport is Bhuntar, Kullu, which is 50 km (that is a couple of hours' drive away), from Jibhi via a taxi.

By Rail: The closest railway station is at Shimla, 150 km/6 hrs south of Jibhi. There is no direct service from Delhi to Shimla, so passengers need to change trains at Kalka. Chandigarh is the closest major railway station, 265 km away from Aut, the entry point to Jibhi. Private buses are available from Chandigarh which will take you up to Aut.

By Road: You can either drive all the way from Delhi to Jibhi or board an overnight bus to Manali with a stop at Aut. From there, hail a private cab or a connecting bus to Jibhi, around 35 km away.



A lush green hill station on the Western Ghats in Kerala, Wayanad is known for its mist-capped mountains, white-water springs and wild forests that boasts flora and fauna unlike any other. This mountainous district is in many ways the most picturesque in the state, with its rolling hills covered with tropical rainforests. Wayanad also contributes richly to the state's fortunes, thanks to the flourishing cultivation of many spices, as well as tea, coffee and cocoa.

THINGS TO DO

Lakkidi Ghat Pass

Set at 700 m above sea level, it is the gateway to Wayanad and is located on the Thamraserry Ghat (pass). With its hairpin curves, driving through the ghat roads is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Pookode Lake

One of the most popular places in Wayanad, the Pookode Lake, is known for its unique shape that resembles the map of India and is surrounded by tall trees along the banks. Boating on the



lake, fresh water aquariums and local handicraft shops will surely entice you.

Soochipara Waterfalls

Also known as the Needle Rock Falls, it is a three-tier waterfall that is at a height of 200 m. Covered by evergreen, deciduous and montane forests, the rocky waterfalls are perfect for bathing, swimming and rock climbing. ■

HOW TO REACH

By Air: Calicut International Airport, in Karipur, is located around 65 km away from Wayanad. Depending upon availability and choice, on arrival at the airport, you can get local taxis to travel till Wayanad.

By Rail: The nearest railway station is Kozhikode (Calicut) from where you can take a cab or bus to Wayanad.

By Road: Transportation to Wayanad is mainly through roadways as State Transport buses are available from all the main districts of Kerala. Alternatively, you can hire a private taxi of course. **NW**