



LCGB Study Tour 01/2020 India – Circular 1

Overall - twenty-six people have shown interest in this tour up to now with no commitment asked as yet to make these firm. Those showing previous interest in this tour have been given more details but this is designed to up-date them and introduce the tour to others that may become interested. In particular I can now give budget prices.

The tour is designed to appeal to a wide range of members, from those who want a holiday involving trains to those that particularly are looking for steam trains. Three couples have currently shown interest as well as Jennifer and myself.

This year we are returning to two railways we visited on our 2016 tour, the Kangra Valley and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. We will also travel on the steam train operating from Delhi to Rewari. So that the tour is limited to fourteen nights in India Simla will not be part of the main tour and our internal longer journeys will be by plane.

As before we are using Amit Chopra of Travelpals, Delhi, to arrange the details in India. He will also be with us for the tour. As some of you know he has proved invaluable on previous tours in India and managed to achieve things that would not have been achieved without him. I will particularly mention steaming of the restored Garratt at Kharagpur on our tour earlier this year, this at no charge to LCGB.

Itinerary - the outline of the tour is as follows:

Night	Date	Day	Hotel	Location	
1	16-feb	Sunday	Marriott	Amritsar	
2	17-feb	Monday	Marriott	Amritsar	
3	18-feb	Tuesday	Judges Court	Kangra Valley	
4	19-feb	Wednesday	Sarovar	Kangra Valley	Steam
5	20-feb	Thursday	Sarovar	Kangra Valley	
6	21-feb	Friday	Lemontree	Delhi	Steam?
7	22-feb	Saturday	Lemontree	Delhi	Steam
8	23-feb	Sunday	Lemontree	Siliguri	Steam
9	24-feb	Monday	Cockrane	Kurseong	Steam
10	25-feb	Tuesday	Elgin	Darjeeling	Steam
11	26-feb	Wednesday	Elgin	Darjeeling	Steam
12	27-feb	Thursday	Elgin	Darjeeling	Steam
13	28-feb	Friday	Lalit	Kolkata	
14	29-feb	Saturday	Lalit	Kolkata	Steam
15	01-mar	Sunday	Tour finishes		

There is no availability of the Windamere for the three nights in Darjeeling. We will certainly visit it. The alternative is the Elgin Hotel, another heritage hotel.

The tour will start in Amritsar early afternoon on Sunday February 16th. We will stay two nights in Amritsar both to allow our adjustment to the time difference and to visit the tourist attractions and the railway works.

On day 3 we will take the local train at 09.15 to Pathankot (time for lunch) where the narrow gauge line along the Kangra Valley starts. We will have diesel haulage to Jwalamukhi Road arriving 17.45 and stay in a local hotel. Next day we will resume our journey but with steam haulage, the ZB66 (pictured 2005), to Palampur or possibly Bajinath. We will have photostops and a bus to chase (photograph) the train. We stay two nights at Palampur. Next day we will travel to



the terminus of the line at Joginder Nagar. Steam has not been allowed to operate to here recently. There will be time to relax after our return to the hotel.

We will leave the Kangra Valley on Day 6, February 21st and fly to Delhi to stay two nights. If the flight is on time, we will visit the Delhi Railway Museum. The next day we will travel to Rewari, the train normally has a WP Pacific, sometimes the Fairey Queen. We return to Delhi on a service train.



Next morning we fly to Bagdogra, the nearest airport to the bottom end of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. We will be picked up by 4x4s that will remain with us throughout our stay in this area so that those who wish to photograph our trains (more than just for run-pasts) can do so. We will spend three days travelling to Darjeeling staying the first night in Siliguri (after a steam charter trip) and the next in Kurseong so we will have three steam charter days. We will spend three nights in Darjeeling. There will be several things to do here. Steam services operate to Ghum several times a day and there is the opportunity to ride the service train to Kurseong and back. If the weather is clear then Everest can be seen from nearby Tiger Hill as the sun rises. There are other places to see in Darjeeling and there will be a guided tour.



We will leave Darjeeling on Day 13, February 28th, and travel in our 4x4s back to Bagdogra Airport for a mid-afternoon flight to Kolkata (Calcutta). We will stay two nights here. We plan to take the train to Kharagpur, hopefully to travel behind the recently restored Garratt.



Amit is talking to our contact there to arrange it. Finally, on Day 15, March 1st we will have a morning tour of Kolkata which will include travelling on the old trams. The tour will finish at lunchtime.

More details – based on prices given by Travelpals the budget price is £2,800 for a shared room. This is costed at 88 Rupees to the Pound and is for over twenty customers. It includes all breakfasts, dinners, transportation in Amritsar and the Kangra Valley, Delhi and as above. It also includes train fares including the steam charter in the Kangra Valley and three days on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, tips and taxes. It does not include flights to/from the UK (or other countries) or the flight from Bagdogra to Kolkata. (See section on flights later.) The single supplement is £780. For singles wishing we will facilitate sharing rooms. At the moment this does not cover a charter of the Garratt until this is guaranteed but this is likely to be £100 per person.

Some of those that expressed interest earlier were asked about possible add-ons to the tours. These included Bangladesh, Simla and the area around Mumbai but there were not significant numbers to justify any option. If any want to add to the main tour then Amit (Travelpals) is willing to arrange this.

Those that have previously expressed interest will receive this both directly from me and via the Bulletin. I shall be sending more details of timings etc. to those interested in the next few weeks. I shall be asking for deposits in August, principally so we can book internal flights before prices increase.

Flights - starting in Amritsar early afternoon on Sunday February 16th will allow travel from the UK (Birmingham) direct to Amritsar arriving that morning using Air India. Flight time is 7.5 hours but these are suspended at the moment but it looks as if they will recommence shortly. It is also possible to fly via Delhi an even travel from there to Amritsar via Simla using trains. The Indian air fare Birmingham to Amritsar, then the Bagdogra to Kolkata, Kolkata-Delhi-London fare is showing at about £550. (Hence leaving Bagdogra to Kolkata off main tour pricing.) It may be possible to break the journey in Delhi coming back. The normal price for the Delhi to Bagdogra flight is around £200 but we have reserved for some 20 around £120. It may be necessary to add a surcharge if demand is greater. Travelpals is willing to do the international flights. Advice will be given if requested.

Overall - this is dearer than our previous tours to India but you may realise the mark-up of LCGB is a lot less than the mark up of commercial tourist companies. Apart from the fall in exchange rates we are for the most part in tourist areas and unfortunately prices have increased.

For new expressions of interest will you please send to myself, Chris Lewis, chrislewiscl@aol.com or leave a message on 07720 755829. As always please ask questions. Unless of a personnel nature I will circulate answers to all those showing interest.