

WHY GO

# Darjeeling Unlimited

This charming town in India's Himalayas has natural beauty, amazing teas and historical cachet in spades. Leslie Patrick lays out the five top reasons to visit.



The snow-capped Himalayas.



Darling Darjeeling.



All aboard the Toy Train.



A sunny afternoon at Glenburn Tea Estate.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEVEN MOORE (2); COURTESY OF GLENBURN TEA ESTATE; SATYAKI BASU / GETTY IMAGES

### Magical mornings

Make the early morning trek to **Tiger Hill** to watch the sun rise over India's highest mountain, Kanchenjunga. Keep warm with a piping hot chai for Rs10 as the first rays light the jagged, snowy landscape. Look on a clear day and you might see the top of Mt. Everest. *Arrange your taxi in advance for around Rs500 per person, roundtrip.*

### Riding the rails

One of only two lines in the world named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the **Darjeeling Himalayan Railway** is affectionately known as the "Toy Train." This narrow-gauge railway runs daily from Darjeeling up to Ghum—India's highest in elevation station—but it doesn't make the hour-long journey for less than 10 passengers. *dhrs.org; tickets Rs360.*

### High tea

Darjeeling is best known for its strong, aromatic tea, and the picturesque plantations dotting its misty hills. Oldest and best known of these is **Happy Valley Tea Estate**—it's been supplying Harrods of London for more than a century. Take a tour, enjoy a tasting and you'll know why this fragrant tea is considered black gold. *18 Lebong Cart Rd.; darjeeling.gov.in/darj-tour.html; free.*

### Classic cocktails

Navigate the labyrinth of alleys clinging to the mountainside to find **Joey's Pub**—a relic reminiscent of an English country cottage. The bar staff serve up a mean gin and tonic, while regaling patrons with colorful local stories. If you're lucky, you'll hear Joey strumming a tune on his guitar between slinging cocktails. *2 S.M. Das Rd.; 91-354/225-8216; drinks for two Rs300.*

### The royal treatment

Fit for a Raja, the **Glenburn Tea Estate and Boutique Hotel** is a colonial gem on the outskirts of Darjeeling. Relax in elaborately decorated rooms and enjoy elegant touches like made-to-order picnic lunches or locally harvested tea served on the veranda as the rising sun strikes distant mountain peaks. *Kambal Tea Garden; glenburnteaestate.com; doubles from Rs26,500. +*