



Discovering Serenity in Dhotrey: A Journey of Self-Exploration

In our quest to escape the chaos of the world and find solace for our souls, we often find ourselves hindered by circumstances. Obligations to work, family, friends, and various responsibilities prevent us from pursuing our own desires. We become accustomed to sacrificing our own needs for the sake of others, growing weary as we neglect our own well-being. Yet, it is important to recognize that self-care is not selfishness; in fact, caring for ourselves enables us to care for others more effectively.

When we confront the longing for a getaway, numerous questions flood our minds. Where should we go? How will we reach there? How can we manage to sustain ourselves in a new environment? And perhaps most crucially, who will accompany us on this journey? These questions can be daunting, often leading us to abandon our plans due to the lack of answers. However, in truth, these are some of the simplest questions to address. Today, I am honoured to provide you with the answers you seek.

Firstly, it is essential to realize that embarking on a solo trip does not require a travel companion. You are your own best companion, capable of venturing out into the world alone. Moreover, traveling by road allows for a greater sense of independence and exploration. As for the matter of survival, finding peace in a place surrounded by serenity and tranquillity is far from insurmountable.

Undertaking a solo trip is an exhilarating, adventurous, and courageous endeavour. Yet, it does not demand an extraordinary amount of bravery to make such a decision; rather, it necessitates a determined mind set. When it comes to choosing a destination, follow your heart's desire. However, I have a recommendation based on my recent escape from the commotion of daily life in search of inner peace. I journeyed to Dhotrey, a picturesque Himalayan village nestled in Darjeeling. Situated at an elevation of 8,500 feet above sea level, it offers an ideal retreat from the burdens weighing you down.

Dhotrey is an enchanting hamlet, boasting a mere 20 houses and a small marketplace comprising a handful of shops where essential provisions can be found. Intriguingly, each dwelling in the marketplace also serves as a restaurant or a homestay, ensuring that accommodation is readily available. The isolation of the village ensures a lack of reliable internet connectivity, prompting a respite from the distractions of the digital world. Instead, one must simply breathe and exist, discovering the true essence of life. Wandering along the undulating mountain roads, attuning your senses solely to the symphony of nature, is a stroke of good fortune.



Allow me to share the profound beauty I encountered during my solo journey. Ascending approximately 2-3 kilometres in search of a vantage point and a glass-encased watchtower, I encountered water accumulated on the road. Undeterred, I pressed onward, my destination firmly in mind. Shortly thereafter, I chanced upon a charming roadside fountain. Subsequently, two breath taking viewpoints unveiled themselves, echoing nature's chorus as I whispered the word "freedom." The ethereal touch of clouds entwined with mist caressed my being, while vibrant hillside flowers stirred the depths of my heart. Within an hour, I reached a forest tower, where I discovered my most faithful companion—peace. I spent an extended period in its comforting embrace, a mix of trepidation and exhilaration coursing through my veins. In this serene haven, my ears were met only with the symphony of my footsteps, the melody of nature, and the melodious chirping of birds. Although the glass-encased watchtower I had initially sought eluded me, what I found in its place proved to be more than sufficient. And so, I left, retracing my steps to my point of origin.



The beauty of a solo trip lies in the freedom to ascend to whatever heights you desire, unburdened by the limitations that companionship often imposes. Even when confronted with waterlogged roads, your spirit remains undeterred, propelling you forward. While the journey may be solitary, you will never feel alone, for you will discover your most steadfast companion within yourself. Moreover, the presence of affectionate canines in the village serves as a reminder that a little love bestowed upon them can result in unwavering loyalty. These four-legged companions will

faithfully accompany you for as long as you desire, providing protection and companionship throughout your sojourn.

If fortune smiles upon you, you may catch a glimpse of the Sleeping Buddha, the majestic Kanchenjunga, provided the clouds part to reveal its grandeur. Although some caution against visiting hill stations during the rainy season due to perceived risks, I hold a different belief. One can embark on this adventure at any time, provided a modicum of caution is exercised and one adapts to the nuances of each season. The allure of the rainy season lies in the gentle dance of raindrops intertwining with the mist, leaving an indelible impression on your soul, offering respite and tranquillity that will linger within you indefinitely.

Due to the village's small size, an ATM has not been installed by the government. Thus, if you wish to visit, it is imperative to carry sufficient cash with you. Now, let us discuss the logistics of reaching this haven. If your primary objective is to seek peace, rest assured that it does not necessitate an exorbitant amount of money. Depending on your chosen route, you can tailor your transportation accordingly. Commence your journey by reaching NJP (New Jalpaiguri), from where you can avail yourself of shared cars that will transport you to Darjeeling more for a nominal fee of ₹40. Once there, you will find shared cars awaiting passengers, ready to convey you directly to your destination. These shared cars charge approximately ₹600 per person, a seemingly substantial expense. However, the journey to Dhotrey can be completed within a reasonable 3 to 4 hours. To secure your preferred seat, it is advisable to search for the driver's contact number online and book in advance. Alternatively, upon arriving at Darjeeling more, you will find cars available for hire. Nonetheless, contacting a driver beforehand to reserve your seat is recommended. Upon reaching Dhotrey, a multitude of homestays awaits your exploration. The average cost for a night's stay is approximately ₹ 800, exclusive of meals. Furthermore, you will be treated to complimentary Darjeeling tea, allowing you to savour the flavours of the region. By budgeting around ₹ 3,000 for a two-night stay, you can comfortably enjoy your experience.

Therefore, do not wait for external forces to propel you forward. Instead, pack your backpack, bid farewell to your abode, and venture forth into the world. Embrace tranquillity, surprise your heart with new discoveries, and grant your eyes the privilege of witnessing nature's captivating magic. Above all, let your soul express heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty, the master creator of this wondrous natural tapestry.