**A slice of Heaven : Backpacking across Sikkim for 6 days**

Author Profile -

Wherever you go, go with all your heart.” – Confucius

I am a financial and economics fanatic who is 21 years old.I truly believe Mark Twain was correct when he said that you will regret the things you did not achieve more than the ones you accomplished. So let go of the bowlines and make your way to open water.

Life is about striking a balance between responsibilities and the pursuit of happiness. And if that means working hard to afford more breathtaking journeys, then so be it.

https://www.instagram.com/vidu.gupta/

As a girl, I have always dreamed of backpacking, and when the opportunity to explore the beautiful gateway of the Himalayas presented itself, I couldn't contain my excitement. I always prefer Mountains over Beaches and I have never been to the North East. So this was my chance to explore the beautiful state of NE.

So, I decided to take a week off and set my sights on Sikkim, a charming and safe destination known for its breathtaking landscapes. After all, who needs to worry about the details when planning a trip? If you're curious about altitude and such, well, there's always Wikipedia for that!

Now, let's talk about the route. I embarked on a journey from Gangtok to Tsomgo Lake, Baba Mandir, Lachen, Gurudongmar Lake, Lachung, and Yumthang Valley, before returning to Gangtok. It was a six-night and five-day adventure filled with scenic drives, memorable sights, and a few unexpected twists.

Day 1

Let's start with Day 1. My expedition began with an early morning flight from Delhi to Bagdogra International Airport. Now, let me tell you, that flight was an adventure in itself. The hilly terrain made for a turbulent ride, and I held onto my seat for dear life. But hey, a little tribulation adds to the thrill, right?

Upon landing, I had pre-booked a cab to take me from Bagdogra to my hotel in Gangtok. The four-hour drive was nothing short of beautiful, with stunning vistas unfolding before my eyes. By the time I arrived at the hotel, I was both exhausted and exhilarated. But who can resist the allure of a nearby local market and mouth watering local cuisine? So, I mustered up the energy to explore and even ventured to the famous Tashi View Point, just a short 3 km walk away. The fantastic weather quickly washed away my fatigue, leaving me feeling refreshed and ready for the days ahead.

For accommodation, I chose Dragon Inn, conveniently located near Tashi View Point. It's a budget-friendly hotel with rates ranging from 1500 to 3000 per night. Now, don't expect luxury here, but it's perfect for the adventurous spirit in search of a cozy place to rest.

Day 2 ;

On Day 2, I embarked on a visit to the renowned Tsomgo Lake, also known as Changu Lake. Legend has it that Buddhist monks used to predict the future by observing the changing colors of the lake. The journey to the lake took around three hours, but every minute was worth it. The picturesque landscapes and captivating weather made it a truly mesmerizing experience. While there, I also had the chance to visit Baba Mandir, a small shrine believed to protect soldiers in the inhospitable high-altitude terrain of the Eastern Himalayas. I even contemplated visiting Nathula Pass, a crucial crossroad between India and China, but alas, the border situation made it impossible during my visit. Nonetheless, the day was packed with adventure, and I returned to Gangtok for a well-deserved overnight stay at Dragon Inn.

Day 3 -

Day 3 took me on a long, 5.5-hour drive to Lachen, a picturesque hamlet in North Sikkim. The journey was filled with jaw-dropping sights, including the Kanchenjunga National Park, where I was lucky enough to spot rare Red bears and countless charming waterfalls. Trust me, taking this route instead of the conventional one is a decision you won't regret.

As we drove through the winding roads, we were treated to some breathtaking views of the mountains. It was like something out of a postcard. But as we got higher and higher in altitude, we started to feel a little queasy. We tried all sorts of remedies to combat the altitude sickness, from chewing on ginger to drinking water infused with local herbs, but nothing seemed to work. We just had to tough it out and hope for the best.

Along the way, we passed through the charming town of Chungthang, near the confluence of two rivers, Lachen Chu and Lachung Chu.

Finally, we arrived in Lachen, and it was like a scene out of a fairytale. The village was nestled in the mountains, surrounded by forests and streams. We spent the rest of the day exploring the area and taking in all the natural beauty.

Day 4 : A Hectic Adventure and the Tale of the Magical Lake

Rise and shine! The day in Lachen began with the mesmerizing sight of snow-capped mountains, as if they were wearing powdered sugar caps. But let's be honest, no mountain breakfast is complete without a heavy dose of deliciousness to fuel our adventurous souls.

Bright and early, at the ungodly hour of 4 a.m., we embarked on a daring expedition to the renowned Gurudongmar Lake - the Highest Altitude Accessible Lake. With bleary eyes and sleepy yawns, we made our way through the darkness, hoping our senses would awaken once we reached our destination.

As the first light of dawn painted the sky, we arrived at Thangu, the last village before the Indo-Chinese border. Little did we know that Thangu would surprise us with its military presence, showcasing an impressive array of regiments, armored vehicles, tanks, and even shelling equipment. It was like stumbling upon an unexpected army exhibition in the midst of our scenic journey.

Finally, at 7:30 a.m., we stood in awe before the breathtaking Gurudongmar Lake, nestled at a staggering altitude of 17,100 feet. Now, I have to confess, the thin air at such heights had a peculiar effect on some of our fellow tourists. As they struggled to catch their breath and faced the consequences of low oxygen, it became clear that nature doesn't always make things easy for us mere mortals.

But let's not dwell on the struggles, for the hills that surrounded us were a sight to behold. They seemed to be forged from pure gold, casting a magical glow over the landscape.After our encounter with this enchanting lake, we retraced our steps back to Lachen for a much-needed lunch break and a brief rest of half an hour. It's amazing how quickly time flies during an adventure-packed journey, but we couldn't linger for too long. Lachung, one of the prettiest settlements in Sikkim, beckoned us with its charm.

As we continued our road trip, excitement bubbled within us, for we were about to witness the awe-inspiring Bhim Nala waterfalls. Cascading down with sheer force, these falls stand tall as one of the highest in Sikkim. Mother Nature certainly knows how to leave us breathless, both figuratively and literally.

Finally, at 5:30 p.m., we arrived in Lachung. Weary from our eventful two-day expedition, we gratefully sank into much-deserved rest. The evening was all about relaxation and recuperation, as we indulged in a delicious dinner at 10 p.m. and followed it up with a well-deserved beer. With contented hearts and a touch of buzz, we drifted off into a deep sleep, dreaming of the adventures that awaited us on the following day.

Day 5

With the break of dawn, we embarked on another early morning adventure, this time to Yumthung, known as the "Valley of Flowers." Unfortunately, visiting in October meant missing out on the colorful blooms. Lady Luck wasn't on our side, but hey, at least we had each other, right?

As we soaked in the valley's beauty, an idea sparked in our tired minds. Why not extend our trip to Zero Point? Negotiating with our trusty driver, we found ourselves at Zero Point, surrounded by ice and an overwhelming sense of adventure. We danced, we played, and we even had a sip of Old Monk, because what's a mountain adventure without a little drink to warm the soul?

Back in Lachung, we made a pitstop at our hotel before embarking on the final leg of our journey to Gangtok. Six hours of tiresome travel later, we finally arrived in Gangtok, but our energy levels were running on empty. The plan to visit M.G. Marg quickly evaporated as exhaustion took over. So, we did what any self-respecting traveler would do: got ourselves a well-deserved beer and hit the sack after a satisfying dinner.

Day 6 (Goodbye with lots of memories)

And so, the time came for us to bid farewell to the enchanting land of Sikkim. With a heavy heart and a mind full of cherished memories, we made our way to the airport on our sixth and final day. As the car rolled along the familiar route, I couldn't help but close my eyes, trying to etch every detail of our trip into my mind.

The snow-capped mountains, the glittering Gurudongmar Lake, the Bhim Nala waterfalls—all the breathtaking sights replayed like a movie in my head. It was as if I had become a human slideshow, reliving each moment with a mix of nostalgia and longing.

But amidst the flood of emotions, a sense of dread crept in. The rat race of daily life awaited us upon our return. The deadlines, the emails, the endless hustle and bustle—it was all looming ahead. I couldn't help but question the choices we make and the priorities we set.

Yet, as the wheels of the car kept turning, I made a pact with my heart. I whispered to it, "Let's go back, earn more money, so that we can pack our bags again and venture to another awe-inspiring place." I promised myself that this wouldn't be the end of our adventures, but merely a pause in the grand scheme of exploration.

After all, life is about striking a balance between responsibilities and the pursuit of happiness. And if that means working hard to afford more breathtaking journeys, then so be it. As I prepared to board the plane, I carried with me not only the souvenirs I had collected but also a sense of determination to create more unforgettable memories in the future.

So, until we meet again, dear Sikkim, with your majestic mountains and welcoming valleys, I'll hold you close in my heart. And to the adventures that lie ahead, I say, "Bring it on!" For there is a whole world out there waiting to be explored, and I am ready to pack my bags and chase after the wonders that await. Goodbye, Sikkim, and thank you for the memories!