



# Cinda Hunter

Darjeeling & Sikkim



My usual trips to India centre around Rajasthan: The "Pink City" of Jaipur where I buy most of my gemstones, silver and jewellery as well as Jodhpur, the "Blue City" or "Sun City" bordering on the desert and near the Pakistan border where I buy furniture as well as glorious. I have a **container on the way** and expected end May / early June and will let you know when it arrives. My latest trip (see below) took me into a small and little known "pocket" in the far north of India, known as the Sikkim region.

**BUT, I do have some beautiful jewellery and gems and some Thangka paintings in stock now...**



The antique amber and coral is increasingly rare.



Thangka painting by Tibetan refugees



Bhutanese shawl pin as centre-piece of a necklace.



Necklaces, bracelets and earrings in silver and semi-precious stones as well as rings, including seals from Angkor (Cambodia) which I had made up in India.

My latest trip saw me venturing into a small and little known "pocket" in the far north of India, known as the Sikkim region. In the foothills of the Himalayas, it is bordered on the left by Nepal, by Tibet above & Bhutan on its right. Darjeeling is the entry point to the region – famous for its tea plantations of Colonial origin. Gangtok and the entire Sikkim region are a hiker's paradise. The region boasts around 1000 different species of orchid and a huge diversity of other flora & fauna.

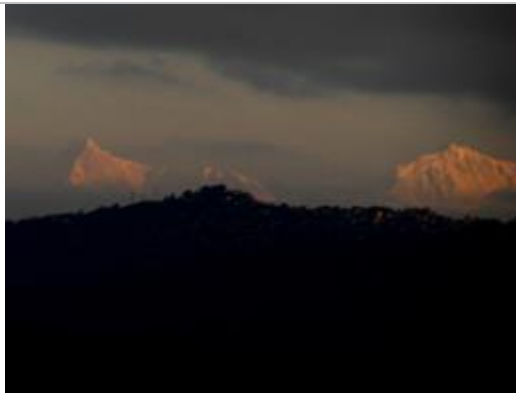


"Hedged" tea bushes following the contours of the land in the lowlands on the way up to Darjeeling.

I spent the night in an eco-friendly guesthouse adjoining one of the best "tea gardens" or plantations, in the small town of Kurseong halfway up to Darjeeling. A highlight of the trip!



The famous Himalayan Railways "toy train" – definitely toy sized - only two tiny carriages, which it "thinks- it-can" puff up the extraordinarily steep hillsides from Kurseong to Darjeeling.



Sunrise over Mount Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world



Puffing along... it takes four hours to travel forty kilometres! ...through tiny picturesque villages, with joyously painted houses adorned with flowerpots ...



.. where everyone comes out smiling to bring their children to wave the train go by. Sounds unreal, doesn't it? We passed tea-pickers whose baskets are carried by a strap over the forehead.

One goes up and down these incredible hills - from valleys at close to sea level up to the hill tops at around 2200m, and then down again, passing in quick succession through a great diversity of flora. At one stage we looked down to the valley floor of the Teesta River near Kalimpong, a destination for white water rafting. In the valleys it is sub-tropical with banana plants abounding, at mid level, broad-leafed forest and bamboo and then up to the misty hill-tops with cedars, lichens and ferns.



Mountainsides so steep that sometimes you have to stop and reverse in order to get around the hairpin bends!

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Open 10am to 4pm Tuesday to Saturday or by appointment

