

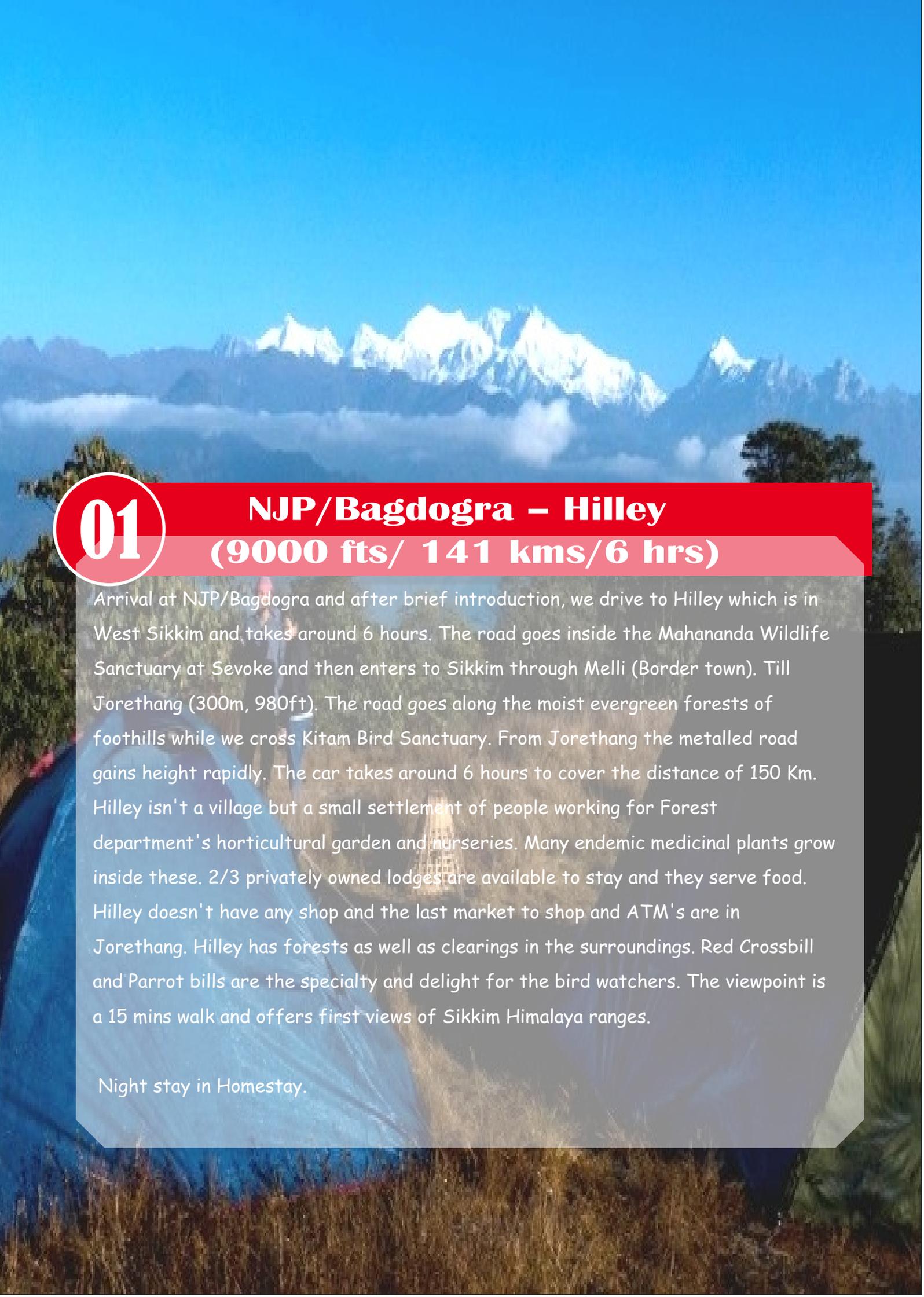
Singalila

Prevalent & Pristine

06 Night 07 Days



*In every walk with Nature one receives
more than he/she seeks...*

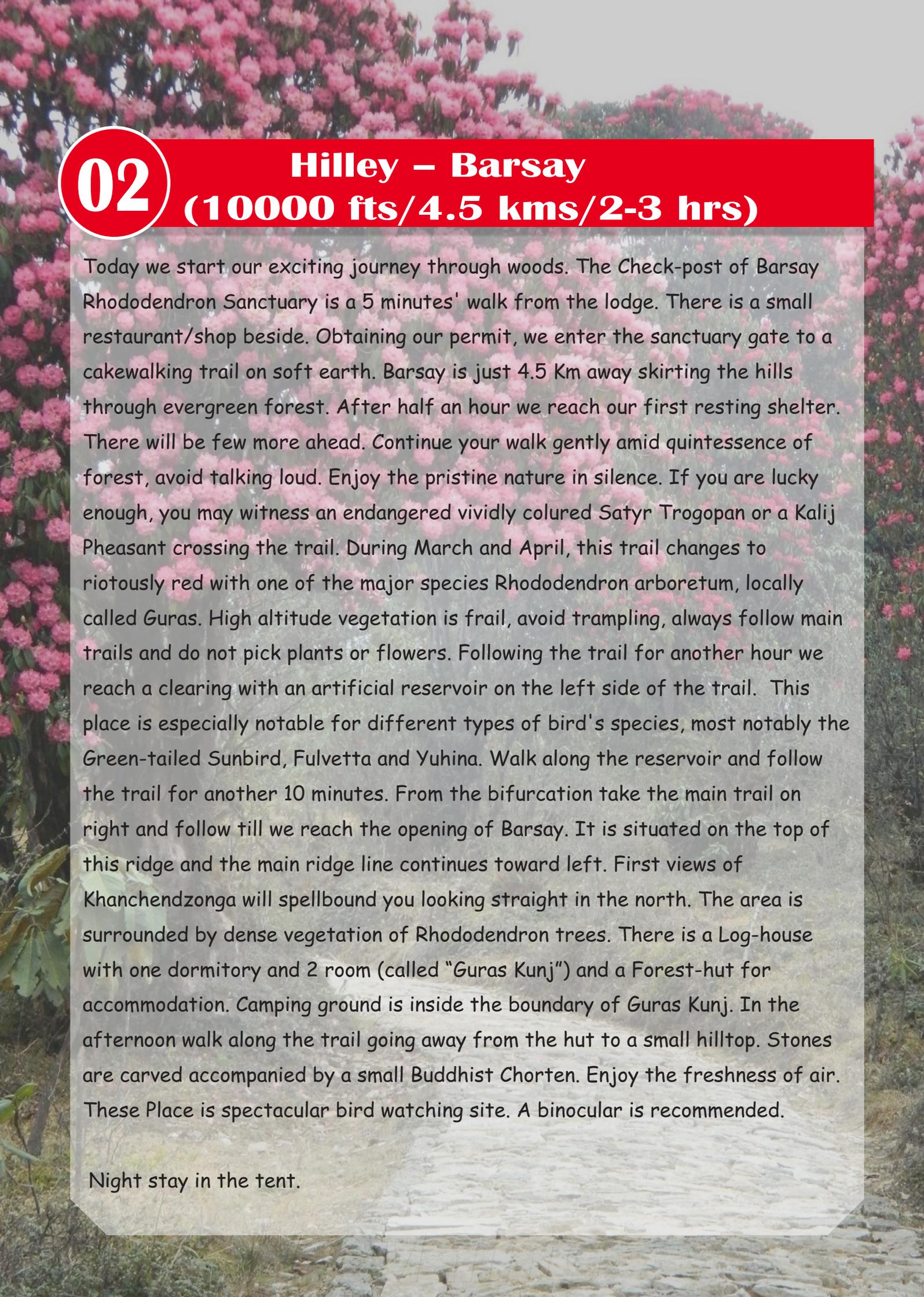


01

NJP/Bagdogra – Hilley (9000 fts/ 141 kms/6 hrs)

Arrival at NJP/Bagdogra and after brief introduction, we drive to Hilley which is in West Sikkim and takes around 6 hours. The road goes inside the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary at Sevoke and then enters to Sikkim through Melli (Border town). Till Jorethang (300m, 980ft). The road goes along the moist evergreen forests of foothills while we cross Kitam Bird Sanctuary. From Jorethang the metalled road gains height rapidly. The car takes around 6 hours to cover the distance of 150 Km. Hilley isn't a village but a small settlement of people working for Forest department's horticultural garden and nurseries. Many endemic medicinal plants grow inside these. 2/3 privately owned lodges are available to stay and they serve food. Hilley doesn't have any shop and the last market to shop and ATM's are in Jorethang. Hilley has forests as well as clearings in the surroundings. Red Crossbill and Parrot bills are the specialty and delight for the bird watchers. The viewpoint is a 15 mins walk and offers first views of Sikkim Himalaya ranges.

Night stay in Homestay.

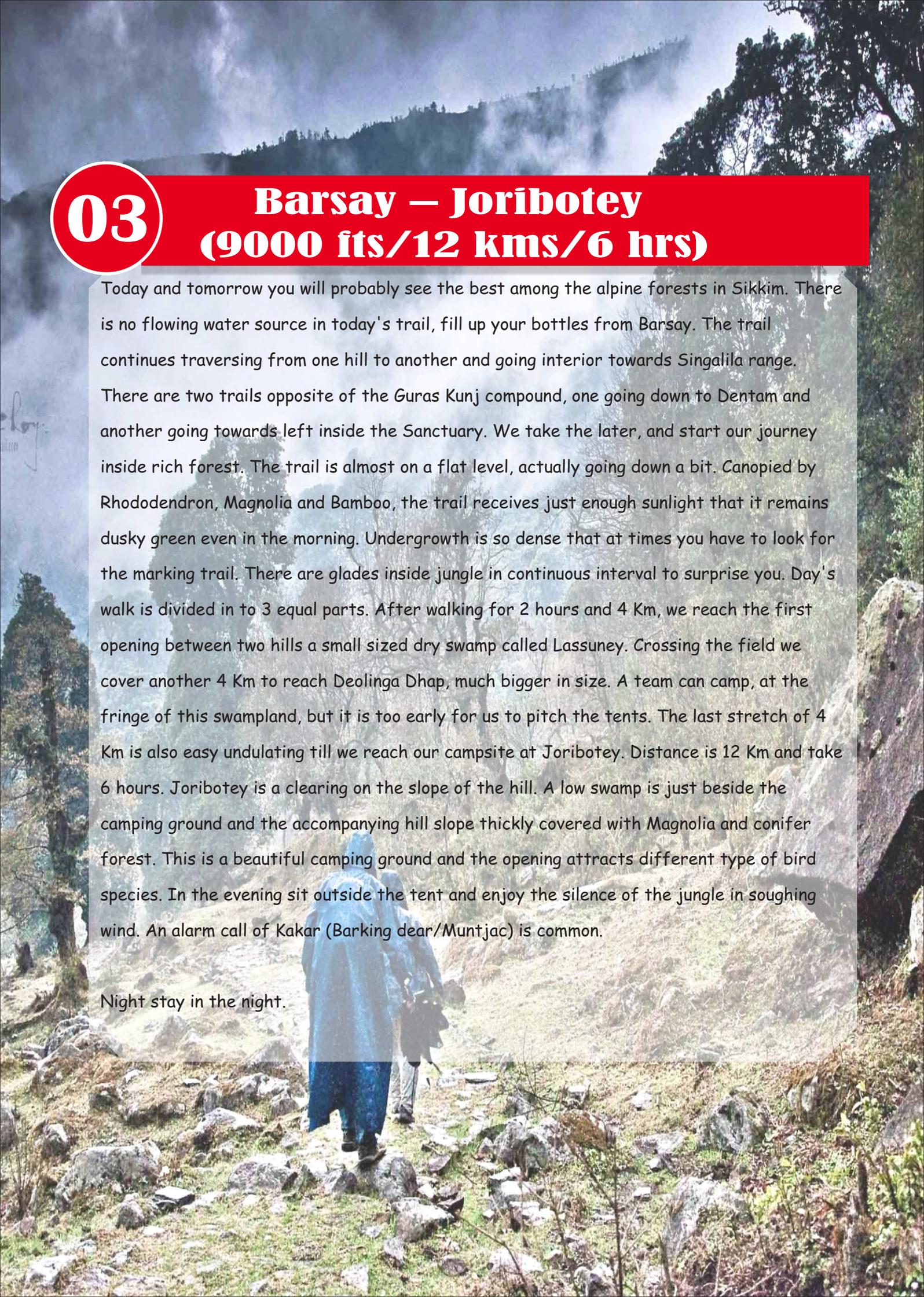
A stone path leads through a dense forest of pink Rhododendron trees. The path is made of light-colored stones and is flanked by lush green foliage and vibrant pink flowers. The background shows a misty or overcast sky, suggesting a high-altitude environment. The overall scene is serene and scenic, typical of a mountain trail.

02

Hilley – Barsay (10000 fts/4.5 kms/2-3 hrs)

Today we start our exciting journey through woods. The Check-post of Barsay Rhododendron Sanctuary is a 5 minutes' walk from the lodge. There is a small restaurant/shop beside. Obtaining our permit, we enter the sanctuary gate to a cakewalking trail on soft earth. Barsay is just 4.5 Km away skirting the hills through evergreen forest. After half an hour we reach our first resting shelter. There will be few more ahead. Continue your walk gently amid quintessence of forest, avoid talking loud. Enjoy the pristine nature in silence. If you are lucky enough, you may witness an endangered vividly colored Satyr Trogon or a Kalij Pheasant crossing the trail. During March and April, this trail changes to riotously red with one of the major species Rhododendron arboretum, locally called Guras. High altitude vegetation is frail, avoid trampling, always follow main trails and do not pick plants or flowers. Following the trail for another hour we reach a clearing with an artificial reservoir on the left side of the trail. This place is especially notable for different types of bird's species, most notably the Green-tailed Sunbird, Fulvetta and Yuhina. Walk along the reservoir and follow the trail for another 10 minutes. From the bifurcation take the main trail on right and follow till we reach the opening of Barsay. It is situated on the top of this ridge and the main ridge line continues toward left. First views of Khanchendzonga will spellbound you looking straight in the north. The area is surrounded by dense vegetation of Rhododendron trees. There is a Log-house with one dormitory and 2 room (called "Guras Kunj") and a Forest-hut for accommodation. Camping ground is inside the boundary of Guras Kunj. In the afternoon walk along the trail going away from the hut to a small hilltop. Stones are carved accompanied by a small Buddhist Chorten. Enjoy the freshness of air. These Place is spectacular bird watching site. A binocular is recommended.

Night stay in the tent.

A hiker wearing a bright blue raincoat is seen from behind, walking on a rocky and uneven trail. The trail is surrounded by lush green vegetation and scattered rocks. In the background, there are misty mountains and dense forests, creating a serene and somewhat somber atmosphere. The hiker is carrying a backpack and appears to be on a long-distance trek.

03

Barsay – Joribotey (9000 fts/12 kms/6 hrs)

Today and tomorrow you will probably see the best among the alpine forests in Sikkim. There is no flowing water source in today's trail, fill up your bottles from Barsay. The trail continues traversing from one hill to another and going interior towards Singalila range. There are two trails opposite of the Guras Kunj compound, one going down to Dentam and another going towards left inside the Sanctuary. We take the later, and start our journey inside rich forest. The trail is almost on a flat level, actually going down a bit. Canopied by Rhododendron, Magnolia and Bamboo, the trail receives just enough sunlight that it remains dusky green even in the morning. Undergrowth is so dense that at times you have to look for the marking trail. There are glades inside jungle in continuous interval to surprise you. Day's walk is divided in to 3 equal parts. After walking for 2 hours and 4 Km, we reach the first opening between two hills a small sized dry swamp called Lassuney. Crossing the field we cover another 4 Km to reach Deolinga Dhap, much bigger in size. A team can camp, at the fringe of this swampland, but it is too early for us to pitch the tents. The last stretch of 4 Km is also easy undulating till we reach our campsite at Joribotey. Distance is 12 Km and take 6 hours. Joribotey is a clearing on the slope of the hill. A low swamp is just beside the camping ground and the accompanying hill slope thickly covered with Magnolia and conifer forest. This is a beautiful camping ground and the opening attracts different type of bird species. In the evening sit outside the tent and enjoy the silence of the jungle in soughing wind. An alarm call of Kakar (Barking deer/Muntjac) is common.

Night stay in the night.

04

Joribotey – Kalijhar (11500 fts/ 13 kms/ 6-7 hrs)

We start our trek taking the trail from the campsite going along the slope of the hill. A small climb on the gradient will take us to the shoulder of this hill and a clearance in the jungle. Here is small lake down on our right called Hans Pokhari, and we turn right. Forest beside the trail here is not thick and we walk on gentle track for 30 minutes. Again we enter in to the dense forest and gain some height for an hour to reach the clearing of the hill top called Achaley. This top has recorded sighting of Red pandas. Clear weather will produce magnificent view of Khanchendzonga and surrounding high peaks. Continue walking straight through the top and descend along the trail to enter into jungle once again. This is a damp and moist forest, and a small ravine alongside. Walk silently to listen to the hundreds of birds chirping and singing in the bushes. Climbing up and down to two small hillocks we reach the largest of the swampland called Thulo Dhap (9300ft) in this trail. A small stream cuts the grassland in between. Take some rest and enjoy the vista once you cross. Fill in the water bottles and start climbing the trail. This is a moderate zigzag climb of nearly 1000 fts and can take one hour or little more. The jungle is a series of stretches of Rhododendron, Birch and Fir trees. Finishing the climb we reach another hill top surrounded by alpine scrubs called Tiktiki. From here we follow the trail gently upwards in to a glade called Kharka Dara (11000ft). Depending up on the time, either we camp here or at Kalijhar (11500ft), 30 minutes further ahead. As these campsites are situated facing the barren high Himalayas, wind is fierce in the afternoon and evening. This will be our halting point for next 2 nights, so that we don't miss any chance to witness the panorama. Night temperature will drop to below freezing in the night and early morning. Frost forms outside the tent even in April or November. Normally mornings are calm and offers enigmatic view of Mt.Khanchendzonga-The Absolute Sleeping Buddha.

Overnight stay in tent.

05

Excursion to Singalila Pass

Today we have a leisure day but we wake up early in the morning. Sunrise can be seen either from Kharka Dara or Kalijhar. We will visit Singalila Pass, the top point in this ridge and return. The first rays on Khanchendzonga create magical reality. It is a brilliant display of radiant colors. Bright streaks of red, pink, and orange. After an early breakfast we start following the wide trail on level ground and skirting one table top we reach Kalijhar. Below on our right the trail on the ridge goes to Chewabhanjyang (Border post of India & Nepal). Kalijhar is another clearing with alpine conifers and scrubs, surrounding the campsite. The top of Kalijhar is Phoktay Dara and a spectacular viewpoint. From here we traverse the hill while the tree line recedes. This particular stretch in the morning is abundant of several bird species. We would prefer it call it as "Sunbird Trail". Fire-tailed Sunbird with its magnificent plumage perch and play in this alpine shrubbery. After continuing our walk for 45 minutes we reach the base of the Singalila Pass. The pass is clearly visible from this point and about 650 ft higher. Endless ridge-lines are visible in the south and east till Barsay. We commence our final ascent to the pass and reach in 30 minutes. Breathtaking view from left to right encompassing majestic Nepal and Sikkim Himalaya to the north. Most of these peaks are towering above 7000m. In the far left (west) we can see the Everest, Makalu & Lhotse and to the right the Three sisters, Chamlang, Baruntse, Khanchendzonga, Simvo, Pandim, Tenzingkhong one after another. The entire Kabru range (North, South, Dome) Fork I/II, Rathong, Frey peak (just above Chaurikhong, HMI base camp area) are south to the gigantic Khanchendzonga and form a semicircle in front of the massif. Spend around an hour and start retracing the trail to return. We return to our campsite and take lunch. In the afternoon we are free to explore the surrounding area. Sunset is a phenomenon which anyone should not miss on the mountain. Shifting patterns of light turns the snow laden mountains in to pink and golden hue.

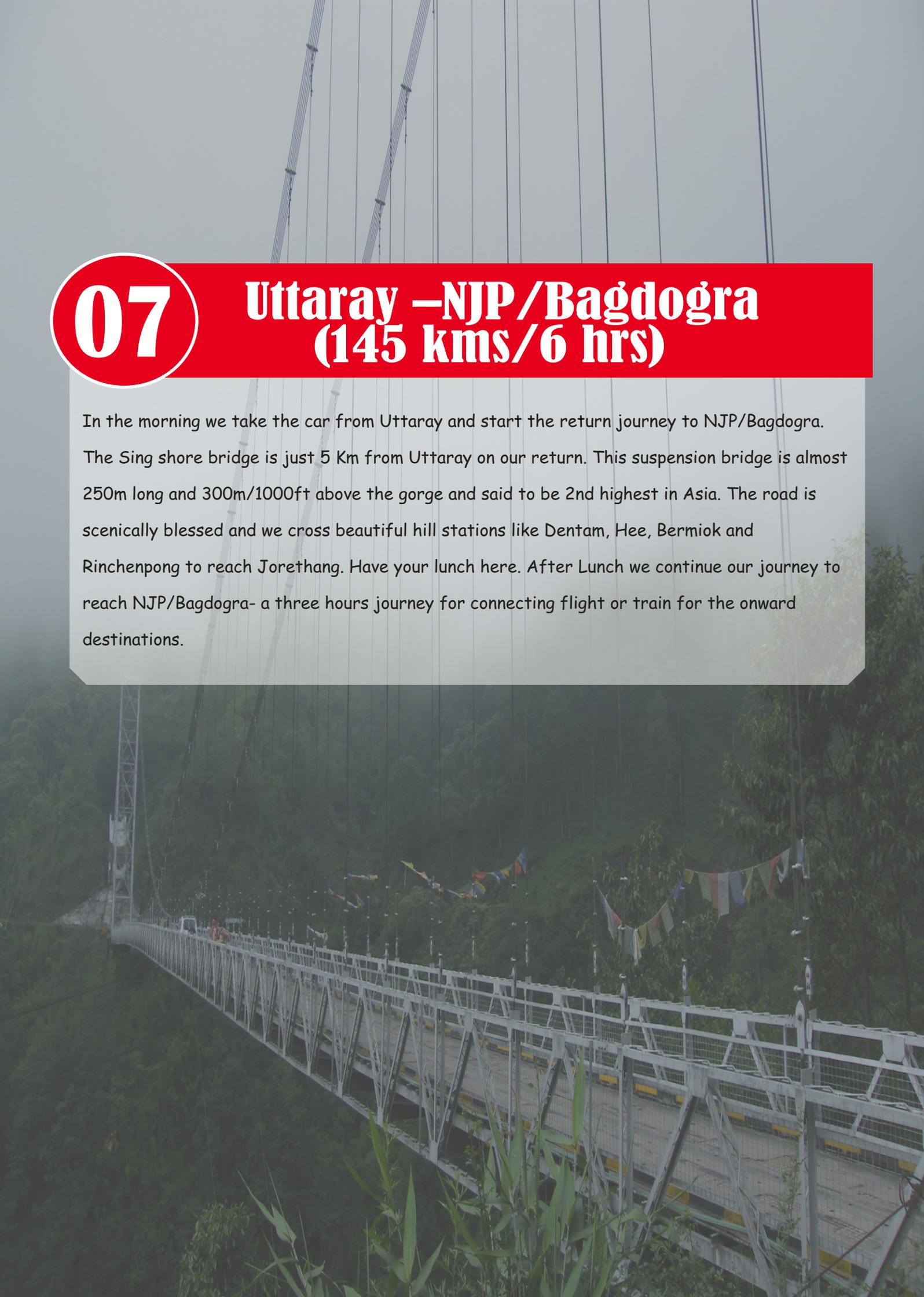
Overnight stay in tent.

06

Kalijhar – Uttaray (14 kms/6 hrs)

Weather on mountain is only predictable to an extent and changes frequently. If the weather remains clear we will visit Phoktay Dara to witness the sunrise and unbelievable panorama. It is only 30 minutes walk from the campsite and on the top of a table mountain. The unmistakable Sleeping Buddha dominates the eye shot. An irresistible temptation for the shutter bugs to try different angles, panorama and hues. We return to the campsite and complete the breakfast. Today is our last day of this charmingly beautiful trek. We return to Achaley top via Tiktiki and Thulo Dhap, this time almost entirely gentle to moderate descent. From here two trails split, the one on the right through which we came and the other which we take now and descends on the slope traversing on our left. The down slope goes through conifers and Rhododendrons in the beginning and evergreen forest at later stage, occasionally passing between glades. After 3 hours we suddenly enter in to a large opening with few homes at fringe. These can be considered upper peripheral houses of Uttaray. Bird's eye view of the entire valley of Uttaray is fantastic, a monastery and mobile tower on a hillock, the main bazaar stretch, the swampland alongside the road down below.

Overnight stay in Homestay.



07

Uttaray –NJP/Bagdogra (145 kms/6 hrs)

In the morning we take the car from Uttaray and start the return journey to NJP/Bagdogra. The Sing shore bridge is just 5 Km from Uttaray on our return. This suspension bridge is almost 250m long and 300m/1000ft above the gorge and said to be 2nd highest in Asia. The road is scenically blessed and we cross beautiful hill stations like Dentam, Hee, Bermiok and Rinchenpong to reach Jorethang. Have your lunch here. After Lunch we continue our journey to reach NJP/Bagdogra- a three hours journey for connecting flight or train for the onward destinations.