

# Himalayan Expedition - I



◆ **24 to 28 Dec , 2008**

◆ **400 km**

( **Gangtok, Kalimpong** )

Sooner or later it had to happen. When all the places of south India gets charted then I am left with no choice but to head northwards. And I need to keep my love for mountain biking so its destination Himalayas!

In fact this was a concept expedition where I had disassembled my bicycle and packed it along with.

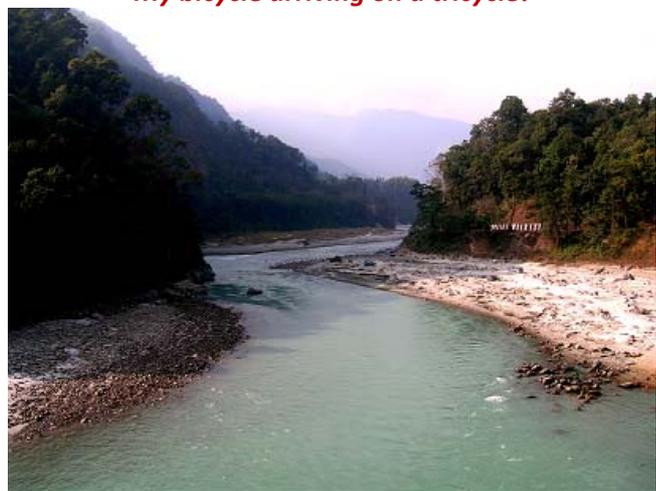
Had reached New Jalpaiguri late night on 23<sup>rd</sup>. The chill was in the air and I was thrilled to start off early morning of 24<sup>th</sup>.

Reached Sevoke bridge by 9 am and it was gentle descend for rest of the day.

Teesta river was flowing besides for company. Spent some time at its banks cooling myself down and taking notes.

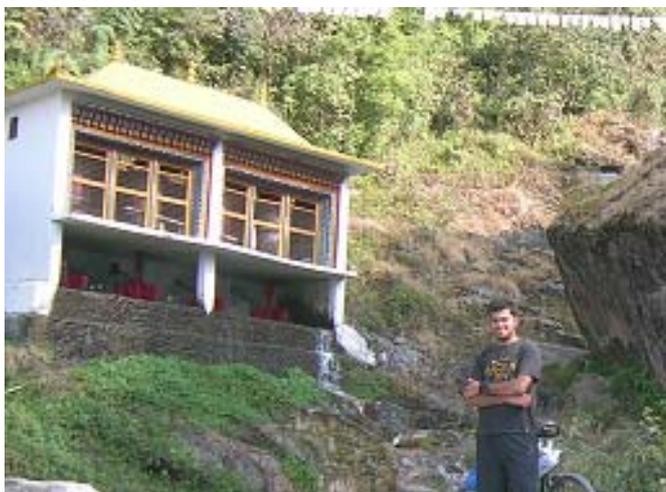


*My bicycle arriving on a tricycle!*



*Teesta river*

The weather was pleasant and the going was great. Reached Gangtok, some 130 km from Jalpaiguri, one day ahead of schedule.



The concept of water-powered prayer wheels really fascinated me. It is believed that water touched by prayer wheels become blessed and purifies all forms of life that it touches.

I had read that sikkim was one of India's least corrupt states and had a very low crime rate. So I was shocked when I realised that my bicycle was stolen! Not wanting to stir up a controversy I started asking around as quietly as possible. It was not hard to track down the culprit, a drug-abused teenager, as there were not many cycles around and a lone cycle attracts attention easily. Giving in to the sympathetic pleas of the boy's mother, I left as quietly as I had arrived.



*Entry point to north sikkim*



I have been to several hill stations and in my opinion Gangtok is the neatest of them all. To top it, pedestrian friendly city planning strategies like fly overs and cobble-stone street blocked off from traffic add to the charm.



*Pedestrian flyovers of Gangtok*



*< Pedestrian dedicated MG-marg*

One thing is obvious if you study the culture of Sikkim. Women are treated with due respect and there is no discrimination on basis of gender. Here I got to see hotels, shops and pubs run by all women team.



***A hotel/pub run by all-women team***



***Buddhist Prayer flags***



Buddhist Prayer flags add a new meaning to all temples and holy shrines in & around sikkim. Each colour, and that too in a particular order, represents different elements

- Blue (symbolizing sky/space)
- White (symbolizing air/wind)
- Red (symbolizing fire)
- Green (symbolizing water)
- Yellow (symbolizing earth)



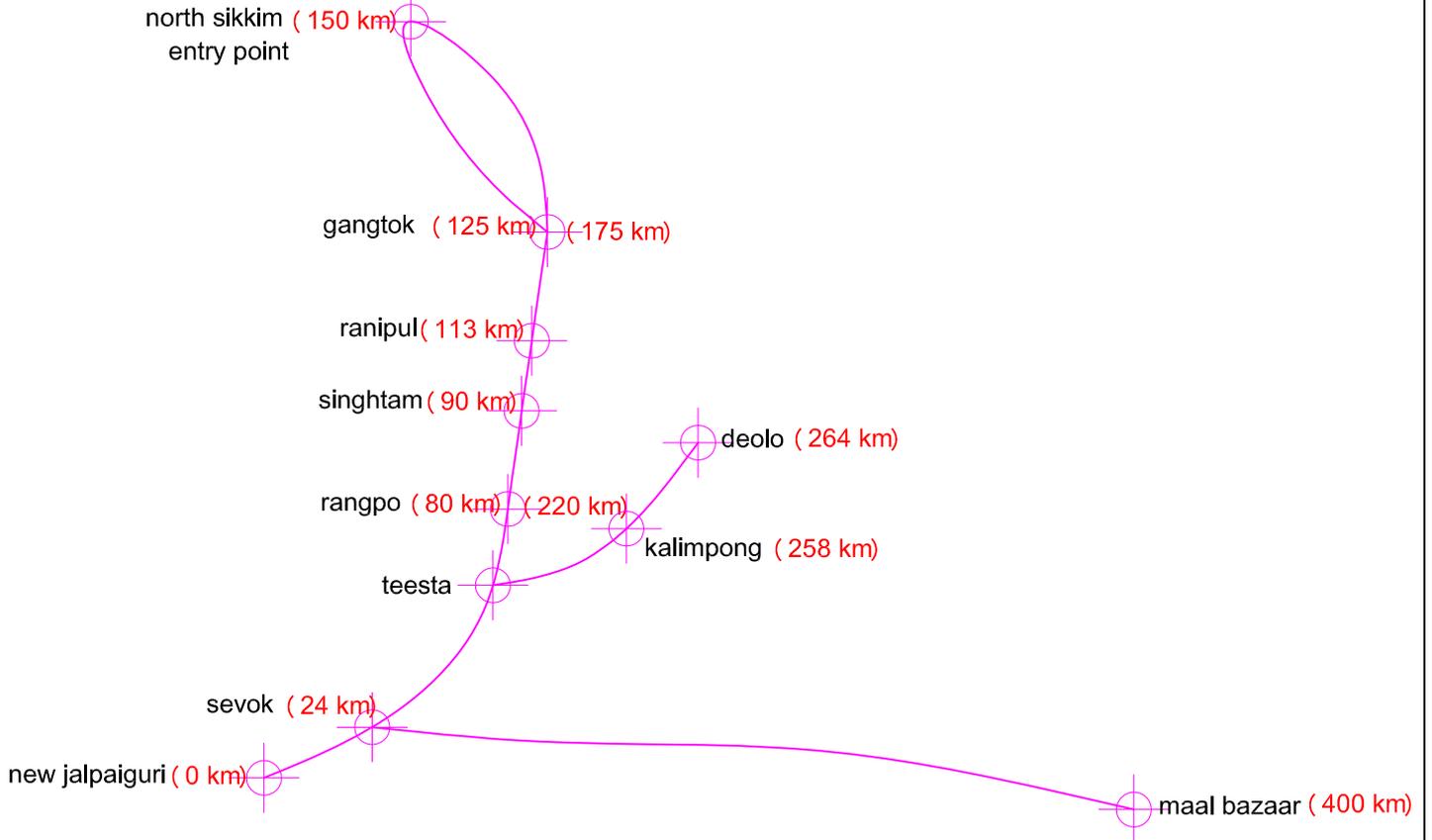
Thanks for the additional day gained on the first leg of the trip, I could add one more destination to my trip – Kalimpong. Kalimpong is a relatively lesser known hill station and offered me some traffic-free bicycling.

***< Deolo hills at Kalimpong***



A glimpse of snow-capped mountains. Plans for next trip already beginning to shape in my mind!

## himalayan expedition - 1 - distance & time map



<u>day</u>	<u>destination</u>	<u>km</u>
1	gangtok	125
2	gangtok ( local)	50
3	rangpo	45
4	maal bazar	180