



## ABOUT HIMACHAL

### The Land of Himachal

Popularly known as the Devbhumi -- "Land of the Gods", Himachal Pradesh is a beautiful hill state in India, nestles in north-west region of western Himalayas. The state is landlocked with the Tibetan plateau to the east, Jammu and Kashmir to the north, and the Punjab to the west. However, the state stands apart from its neighbours in terms of its sheer topographic diversity and breathtaking pristine natural beauty. From vast tracts of high-altitude Trans-Himalayan desert to dense green deodar forests, from apple orchards to cultivated terraces, from snow capped high Himalayan mountain ranges to snow fed lakes and gushing rivers.

### Brief Socio-Political History of the State

The earliest known inhabitants of the region were tribals called Dasas. Later, Aryans came and they assimilated in the tribes. In the later centuries, the hill chieftains accepted suzerainty of the Mauryan empire, the Kaushans, the Guptas and Kanauj rulers. During the Mughal period, the Rajas of the hill states made some mutually agreed arrangements which governed their relations. In the 19th century, Ranjit Singh annexed/subjugated many of the states. When the British came, they defeated Gorkhas and entered into treaties with some Rajas and annexed the kingdoms of the others. The situation largely remained the same until 1947. After Independence, 30 princely states of the area were united and Himachal Pradesh was formed on 15th April, 1948. On 1st November, 1966, certain areas belonging to Punjab were included in Himachal Pradesh. On 25th January, 1971, Himachal Pradesh was made a full-fledged State.

The State is bordered by Jammu & Kashmir on North, Punjab on West, Haryana on South, Uttar Pradesh on South-East and China on the East.

## GETTING TO HIMACHAL

There are five major zones that draw the maximum visitor or act as base camps for most of Himachal – Shimla, Kullu and Manali, Dalhousie and Chamba, Kangra- Dharamshala-Palampur and Paonta-Nahan. From these routes one can explore "off-beat" destinations also. A wide range of accommodation like tourism hotels, private hotels, guest houses, home stays, rest houses etc. are available in these areas.

### Shimla

By Air: The airport is at Jubbarhatti, 23 km from Shimla city and is connected to Delhi. Taxi/cabs are available.

By Rail: Shimla is connected by a broadgauge line up to Kalka (90 km). The journey between Kalka and Shimla takes about six hours and is one of the finest ways of enjoying the landscape. The quaint rail car, which runs on this stretch, takes about five hours. A luxury coach that accommodates six persons has recently been introduced and can be attached to any train of your choice. The Shivalik Express is a deluxe train on this route. Delhi (380 km), Chandigarh (120 km) and Kalka (90 km) from Shimla.

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By Road: Shimla is connected by road to all major cities in north India. Taxi cabs for Shimla are available at Delhi, Chandigarh, Ambala and Kalka. Several state-run transport corporations including the Himachal Tourism Development Corporations ply Volvo ac and deluxe buses from Delhi and Chandigarh. Buses can also be chartered.

#### Dharamshala, Kangra and Palampur

By Air: The airport at Gaggal is 14 km from Dharamshala, 10 km from Kangra and 23 km from its twin town Mcleodganj. Palampur is 40 km away. Taxis are available.

By Rail: Pathankot is the closest broadgauge railhead and is 85 km from Dharamshala and 124 km from Palampur. Taxis are available. You can opt for the narrow gauge train for a taste of the area. It connects Pathankot to Jogindernagar. The station feeding Dharamshala is Kangra Mandir (20 km) and the one for Palampur is Maranda.

By Road: Dharamshala is accessible from National Highway No. 20 and is well linked to the region. It is 12 km from Gaggal town. Palampur is 38 km from Dharamshala and even independently is well linked. Dharamshala is 17 km from Kangra.

An interesting variation of the standard can be made by taking the train from Delhi up to Jalandhar or Una and then traveling by road. En route you can visit the shrines of Chintpurni, Jawalamukhi and Bajreshwari Devi (Kangra). The shrine of Naina Devi is also easily accessible if you opt for the Nangal railway station. The road distance from Jalandhar to Dharamshala is 165 km along this route.

#### Kullu and Manali

By Air: The airport at Bhuntar is the common base that feeds these towns. This is 10 km from Kullu and 50 km from Manali. Public transport buses and taxis are available.

By Road: Kullu and Manali are connected by an extensive network of road with the northern region. Air-conditioned and non air-conditioned deluxe coaches are run by HRTC, HPTDC and by private sector operators. National Highway No. 21 runs through the valley and connects Chandigarh and Delhi. Kullu is 535 km from Delhi.

#### Dalhousie and Chamba

By Air: The closest airport is at Gaggal (Kangra) near Dharamshala which is 125 km (Approx) from Dalhousie and 170 km (Approx) from Chamba via Banikhet route. Taxis are available.

By Rail: The nearest railhead is at Pathankot 85 km from Dalhousie and 120 km from Chamba . Taxis are available.

By Road: Both Dalhousie and Chamba are well connected by road. Taxis and regular coaches connect the towns.

#### Nahan, Paonta and Renuka (Sirmaur)

By Air: The closest airport is at Chandigarh.

By Rail: The nearest railhead is at Ambala and Kalka . Taxi's are available.

By Road: From Ambala, Chandigarh & Kalka and Dehradun. Regular bus service connect the towns. Paonta Sahib is 45 km and Renuka is 38 km from Nahan.

## **DESTINATIONS AT HIMACHAL**

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### Dalhousie

Dalhousie (2036 m) is a hill station full of colonial charm that holds lingering echoes of the Raj. Spread out over the five hills (Kathlog, Potreys, Tehra, Bakrota and Balun) the town is named after the 19th century British Governor General Lord Dalhousie. It was popular with the British Army personnel in 1860's. The town's varying altitude shades it with a variety of vegetation that includes stately grooves of pines, deodars, oaks and flowering rhododendrons. Rich in colonial architecture, the town preserves some beautiful churches. St. John church is the oldest one built in 1863, St. Francis was built in 1894, St. Andrew in 1903 and St. Patric in 1909.

There are also magnificent views of Chamba valley and the mighty Dhauladhar range with its awe-inspiring snow covered peaks filling an entire horizon. By road Dalhousie is about 555 km from Delhi, 52 km from Chamba via Banikhet and 46 km via Khajjar and the nearest railhead at Pathankot is 85 km away.

### Shimla

With all its intricacies, history seems to have been the mortar for every brick and stone that has built Shimla. As the summer capital of British India for well over a century it was the seat of one of the most powerful governments in the world. From its cedar-shaded heights, one fifth of the human race was ruled and the decisions made those decades ago affect our lives to the present day.

The town of Shimla rose in the nineteenth century when the Gurkha Wars came to an end in 1815-16 and the victorious British decided to retain certain pockets as military outposts and sanitarium. In 1822 the most rigorous of dandies and the greatest of sticklers for form Captain Charles Pratt Kennedy, Political Agent to the Hill States directed that a house be built for him at the village whose name is variously reported as Sheyamalaya Shumlah, Shimlu and Shemlah. Kennedy House led the vanguard of the hundred-odd houses that were to scatter themselves by 1841 over every level or gently inclining space. Lured by the climate and terrain scores of European invalids began moving to the station and the only stipulation of the local chief who owned the land was that no tree be cut or cattle slaughtered.

In 1864 the Viceroy, John Lawrence anointed Shimla – then spelt Simla, as the summer capital of British India. With Lawrence came the Viceroy Council, the Imperial Secretariat, representatives of the Indian princes and foreign envoys. As the town grew to become the workshop of the Empire, an awed visitor observed, every pigeonhole cradled an embryo of a war or death. Despite the fact that up to the time of Indian independence in 1947, Shimla officially remained only the summer capital, yet the Government spent more time in these hills than at the actual capital Calcutta and later New Delhi. As the bearer of the Viceregal sceptre this tiny pocket became the cynosure of British Empire. Imperial grandeur, and all the panoply and trappings of power came along for the ride. And there was a popular local saying that went, "You cannot sleep the nights in Simla for the sound of grinding axes". A social whirl of parties, gymkhanas, balls, fancy fairs and affaires du Coeur ensured that a heady mixture of scandal and intrigue constantly wafted through the town.

Quite inevitably the freedom movement had a close connection with Shimla. Ornithologist and former Civil Servant, Allan Octavian Hume created the Indian National Congress which spearheaded the struggle while living in the town.

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Stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Maulana Azad regularly visited Shimla. Major events that took place in the town were the Simla Conference in 1942, the deliberations of the Cabinet on and finally the decision to partition India.

And while the British Empire may have ceased to exist, its echoes linger on in the architecture and ambience of this hill resort. The elements of nostalgia may be strong but Shimla also has a youthful vigour in its pace. Its easy accessibility and several other attractions have made it one of India's most popular hill resorts. There are many unforgettable walks, day-excursions by the dozen, a variety of convenient shopping and entertainment museums, and ice-skating in winter. Shimla is the base or the unwinding point for numerous exhilarating routes to the state interior.

Today the town is distinctive for its variety of architecture. It has one of the rare surviving urban forests, made all the more unique, for its species are temperate to alpine ones in what is otherwise a tropical zone. And then Shimla's famous Mall offers one of the longest stretches of pedestrian shopping in the world.

Within and around Shimla, the public and private sector offer an enormous range of accommodation that range from modern to heritage hotels. Like satellites placed around the centre, there are many resorts in Shimla's periphery that are full-fledged destinations in their own right. These are located at Mashobra, Naldehra, Kufri, Shilon Bagh and Chail. En route by road from Kalka there are Parwanoo, Dharampur and Kasauli.

#### Mandi

The historic town of Mandi (800 m) is built along the banks of the river Beas. It has long been an important commercial centre and the sage Mandva is said to have meditated here. This one time capital of the princely state of Mandi is a fast developing town that still retains much of its original charm and character. Today, it is a district headquarters. Mandi is renowned for its 81 old stone temples and their enormous range of fine carving, it is often called the 'Varanasi of the Hills'. The town has remains of old palaces and notable examples of 'colonial' architecture. The temples of Bhutnath, Trilokinath, Panchvaktra and Shyamakali are among the more famous ones. The week long international Shivratri fair, Mandi is the major attraction of the area every year. In the year 2011 the fair is scheduled to be held from 3rd-9th March. In the fair the activities like cultural programmes in the evenings, exhibitions, sports etc. are the major attractions for the tourists as well as locals.

#### Chamba

The town of Chamba, the district headquarter of Chamba district is situated in the western Himalayas between north latitudes 32°10' and 33°13' and east longitudes 75°45' and 77°33'. The town stands on a plateau on the right bank of the Ravi river valley between Dhauladhar and Zanskar ranges south of the inner Himalayas. This town was founded by Raja Sahil Varman when he conquered the lower Rani valley from the petty chiefs called Ranas and Thakurs in the beginning of 10th Century. It seems the original name of the town was Champa as mentioned in Kalhan's Rajtarangani. In the bansauli or genealogical rolls of the Chamba Rajas a reference occurs of place which was adorned with highly fragrant Champaka trees and guarded by Goddess Champavati or more popularly known as Chameshni. The temple was built by

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Sahil Varman in the honour of his daughter Champavati who is worshipped as a goddess in Chamba. Champavati temple became the family temple of the ruling family.

#### Manali

Just 40 kms away from Kullu to the north, Manali is situated near the end of the valley on the National Highway leading to Leh. The landscape here is breath taking. One sees well-defined snow capped peaks, the Beas river with its clear water meanders through the town. On the other side are deodar and pine trees, tiny fields and fruit orchards. It is an excellent place for a holiday, a favorite resort for trekkers to Lahaul, Spiti, Bara Bhangal (Kangra), and Zaskar ranges. From temples to antiquity, to picturesque sight-seeing spots and adventure activities, Manali is a popular resort for all seasons and for all travellers. The annual State level Winter Carnival is scheduled to be held from 23rd to 27th January, 2011.

#### Approach

Rail: Nearest convenient rail head are at Chandigarh and Pathankot. Manali can be reached from road from these stations.

Road: Manali is well connected by road with Delhi, Ambala, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Haridwar, Shimla, Dharamsala and Chamba/Dalhousie. Regular buses ply between these stations. It is connected with Leh during July to October.

#### Distances from Manali

Places to visit	Km
Arjun Gufa	4
Club house	2
Hidimba Devi temple	2.5
Jagatsukh	6
Kothi	12
Manu temple	3
Nehru kund	5
Rahala water falls	16
Rohtang pass	51
Solang valley	13
Vashisht hot water springs and temples	3
Mandi	110
Keylong	120
Trilokinath	152
Kaza	200
Kangra	240
Shimla	260
Chhatru (L&S)	81

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Batal (L&S)	110
Kunzum Pass	122

### Kullu

The most charming and beautiful Kulu valley spreads out its charm on either side of river Beas. The valley runs north to south of this river and is 80kms. long and about 2kms. at its broadest. Yet with awe inspiring glens and mossy meadows encircled by the rushing streams and meandering brooks, flung east & west, a fairly wide area is open to the tourists, the trekkers, the mountaineers, the artists and to anyone who wishes to escape the heat & dust of the plains to breathe the exhilarating air of the Himalaya and enjoy the spectacle of the variegated mountain scenery. The valley is also famous for its exquisitely woven colourful hand made shawls and kullu caps.

### Approach:

Air: Kullu is connected by Indian Airlines and Air Deccan with Delhi. The airport is at Bhuntar, 10kms. from Kullu.

Rail: Nearest convenient rail heads are Kiratpur and Chandigarh on Broad Gauge and Jogindernagar on Narrow Gauge from where Kullu can be reached by road.

Road: Kulu is well connected by road with Delhi, Ambala, Chandigarh, Shimla, Dehradun, Pathankot, Dharamsala & Dalhousie etc. Regular direct buses ply between these stations including deluxe, semi-deluxe and air conditioned buses during tourist season.

### SPITI

Spiti is the sub division of Lahaul & Spiti district with its hqrs. at Kaza. It is called "Little Tibet" because it has almost the same terrain, vegetation & climate . Spiti also means "Middle Country". It lies between Tibet, Ladakh, Kinnaur, Lahaul & Kulu. From Shimla via Kinnaur there is a motorable road which remains open upto Kaza for 8 to 9 months. About 10kms. ahead of Pooh, satluj enters India near Shipki la & Spiti river joins it at Khab. The road then goes to Sumdo via Hangrang valley. From Sumdo Spiti valley starts. The Spiti river flows fast through deep gorges at some places. The valley is not wide but there are villages and some fields where people grow barley, buck- wheat, peas & vegetables. It has an area of 4800 sq. kms. Some inhabitants have adopted Buddhism as there faith and Bhoti is the spoken language. The people are simple and honest. The main Spiti valley is split into eastern and western valleys. They are connected with Ladakh & Tibet on eastern side & Kinnaur and Kulu on western side through high passes.

Giu Village: Located near the Indo-Tibet border, the village has a naturally preserved unique Mummy, which is more than 500 years old and is an attraction for the visitors. The village Giu is situated at a height of approx 10,000 feet above the sea level. The mummy in the village is placed in a room constructed on a hilltop. It is believed that this mummy is of a Lama, who died at the age of around 45 years and was found in a sitting posture. Presently, the mummy is kept in an open glass box. Giu village is approximately 10 km from Giu nallah and village is connected with link road. Giu nallah is between Sumdo and Tabo.

### Approach

There are two routes to enter Spiti.

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From Manali via Rohtang Pass to Kaza, the hqtr. of Spiti. Manali is connected by Air, Rail and Road. From Manali, there is a regular bus from July to October.

From Shimla via Kinnaur. Shimla is connected by Air, Rail & Road. From here by buses to Kaza from May to October.

### **LAHUL SPITI**

Lahaul and Spiti are two remote Himalayan Valleys of H.P. lying on the Indo-Tibet border. Strange, exciting, primitive, these valleys are unsurpassed in mountain scape, in the rugged beauty of their rocky escapements and the splendor of their snow covered peaks.

Lahaul is marked by a central mass of uniformly high mountains and massive glaciers. The two rivers, Chandra and Bhaga which rise on either side of the Baralacha La, flow through the narrow Chandra and Bhaga valleys. Lahaul is a land of fascinating Buddhist art and culture. The monasteries of Lahaul-Spiti are rich repositories of ancient murals, thankas, wood carving and golden images of Padmasambhava. The valley lies at a height of 2745 metres above sea level. Summer in this valley is cool and pleasant with green grass and alpine flowers. There are little monsoon in both these valleys and this enables climbers & trekkers to enjoy a long and unbroken season in perpetual sunshine to explore the wilderness and grandeur of the inner Himalaya. This unique feature makes Lahaul-Spiti as an ideal destination for tourists and trekkers in the month of July, August and September. Keylong is 115 kms. from Manali and is the District Headquarters of Lahaul-Spiti District.

#### **Approach**

Lahaul is connected with road from all parts of the country. Manali is the point where buses from various stations come. From here, one can take bus/taxi to any destination in Lahaul-Spiti, Pangi & Leh during the months between June to November depending upon opening and closing of Rohtang pass (3979 m), the gateway to this valley. National highway 21 is passes through this valley enroute to Leh.

#### **Dharamshala**

This is a hill station lying on the spur of the Dhauladhar range about 17 kms north- east of Kangra town. This hill station is wooded with oak and conifer trees and snow capped mountains enfold three sides of the town while the valley stretches in front. The snowline is perhaps more easily accessible at Dharamshala than at any other hill resort and it is possible to make a day's trek to a snow-point after an early morning's start. Dharamshala is also the headquarter of the Kangra district.

In 1905, tragedy struck Dharamshala when an earthquake levelled it completely. After its reconstruction, Dharamshala flourished as a quiet health resort. It is divided into two distinct parts. Lower Dharamshala has civil offices and business establishments with courts. Kotwali bazar and Upper Dharamshala comprise of places with names which bear witness to its history like McLeod Ganj and Forsythe Ganj. Since 1960, when it became a temporary headquarter of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Dharamshala has risen to international fame as "The Little Lhasa in India". Mcleodganj is 9 km from Dharamshala.

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In and around Dharamshala, one can visit the Kangra Art museum at Kotwali bazar, War memorial, Kunal Pathri temple and tea gardens on way to Kunal Pathri. There is also a beautiful Cricket stadium in the city facing mighty Dhauladhar.

## Chail

Chail was the summer capital of the former princely state of Patiala. It came into being in the late nineteenth century when it's handsome and dashing Maharaja Bhupender Singh was banished from Shimla, the summer capital of British India for a dalliance with the British Commander –in-Chief's daughter. Smarting at this insult, Bhupender Singh began exploring the neighbouring hills with a single guiding force – to find a hill that was within sight of Shimla but higher. The little village of Chail seemed perfect. Shimla lay within direct vision, and most important, Chail was higher than the British controlled Shimla town. Large tracts of the land here already belonged to him. This had been given to his ancestors for services rendered during the Gurkha wars which had come to an end in 1815-16. A site was selected and the Maharaja began building his summer palace. But an ill omen seemed to hang over the construction area. Local legend has it that the moment anything was built, it would collapse over night. Dozens of snakes would appear from nowhere and attack the labourers. Then Bhupinder Singh had a dream. A sage appeared before him and declared that the site the Maharaja had chosen was where he had meditated till he was taken by the earth, and his peace should not be disturbed. The Maharaja had the sage's blessing to build on any other spot. Bhupinder Singh moved to another site and at the original spot – which is about a kilometre from the Palace Hotel – he had a temple built to the sage. Here the stone embodiment of the sage may still be seen along with the iron tongs and trident. The shrine is known as the Sidh Baba Ka Mandir and is revered by many who claim that the sage has the power to grant boons. Meanwhile Bhupinder Singh had another site levelled out and a splendred mansion was built and sumptuously furnished. And at 2226 m, a good hundered meters above Shimla's average height, Bhupinder Singh's summer capital was prepared to taken on the British one at equal terms.

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