

# JAN Treks & Travels

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Journeys into Adventure and Nature

## **Spiti Discovery - 14 days**

Chandigarh to Spiti Valley via Kullu Valley

**Tour JTT-HP01:** Chandigarh - Manali - Kaza - Kibbar - Tabo - Pin Valley - Demul - Komik - Kaza - Manali - Chandigarh

Spiti is a true Shangrila if there ever was one. Nestled in a large meander of the mighty Himalayan Range, it has always been closer - and, therefore, more exposed to - Tibet than to any place in India. In summer we can approach it from nearby Manali by crossing two high passes. On this trip you'll explore some of the highest inhabited villages in the world, you'll be awed by the Spitians' adaptation to their harsh environment and mesmerized by their Buddhist culture. You'll explore the area by jeep, on foot, and even yaks, and sleep in hotels as well as simple but clean homestays.

### ***Itinerary***

#### **Day 01: Pick up From Chandigarh Railway Station transfer to Hotel.**

Our tour guide will receive you at Chandigarh Railway station and accompany you to your hotel, where you'll have dinner and your overnight stay.

#### **Day 02: Chandigarh – Manali**

Most of the day will be spent driving up through the lush green Himalayan foot hills of Himachal Pradesh till we reach the green hill station of Manali. Situated among pine forests at an elevation of almost 2000m, the snow-covered peaks of the Pir Panjal looming in the north, Manali is a pleasant, bustling market and tourist town. In the afternoon there will be some time to explore the market or even walk to the Hadimba Temple, hidden in the forest above the town. Your hotel is situated just outside the town for dinner and overnight stay.

#### **Day 03: Manali Naggar and Solang**

We drive for Naggar, an old ancient capital of Kullu Valley, during the period of King Sidh Singh in 1550 AD is located in the middle of the valley, which later shifted to Kullu. The King was blessed by Goddess Hadimba (a very famous local deity in Manali) to rule the whole of Kullu Valley, which he could see in the North and South. Nagger Castle still lies above the Naggar Village from here one can get magnificent panorama of the Kullu Valley, to the North lies the Rohtang pass and Bajaura to the

South of the Valley. Naggar has a famous Art Gallery, belongs to the famous painter, philosopher, mystic, writer and traveler Nicholas Roerich; he was a Russian and later made this place his home for a long time. It is also famous for ancient temples of Shankar, Vishnu and Krishna. In the earthquake of 1905 the tunnel, linking Naggar and Parvati Valley got destroyed. Further drive to Manali, the most beautiful drive in Kullu valley, with wonderful surrounding of old traditional houses and absolute simple life, paddy field dotted by the chalets. Overnight in the Hotel.

#### **Day 04: Manali to Kaza (210 km / 10 hr)**

Today we start early and drive over the Rothang pass (separating Kullu from the Lahaul Valley), and enter into the valley of the Chandra river and continue passing Chhatru, Batal and over the Kunzum La pass at an altitude of 4551 mts, which divides Lahaul and Spiti. We spend some time taking in the fabulous views of the Chandrabhanga ranges of mountains, we visit the Buddhist shrine at Kunzum and get into our waiting jeeps, and drive for Kaza, Reached there in evening. Overnight in the hotel.

#### **Day 05: Kaza – Kye - Kibber - Tashigang (3 hr by jeep / 1.5 hr by bike)**

Today we drive in our jeeps to the highlands of the left bank plateau for altitude acclimatization. Here we visit the Kye village (about ½ hour journey) and the Kye Gumpa, the largest monastery in Spiti. After visiting the monastery we interact with the monks and drive to Kibber Village (another ½ hour drive), which is 14,000 feet above sea level, is the road head for the trade route into Ladakh over the Parang La. We continue to the village of Gette and Tashigang (about 1 hour drive), high up in the mountains – this area is famous for Spiti horses bred for trade with nomadic “Changpas” of Ladakh in exchange for the valuable Pashmina wool. On our way back we have the option to bike back to Kaza on Fire Fox mountain bikes\* the evening can be spent roaming the Kaza market where one may find interesting local handicrafts. Overnight at the hotel / home stay.

*\*Biking is an option for a group size of maximum 4 people. The biking is mostly downhill, so it is not strenuous.*

#### **Day 06: Kaza – Tabo (4 hr)**

After breakfast we leave Kaza for Pin Valley which is a tributary of the Spiti River. On enroute we will get the opportunity to see some of the other initiatives pertaining to promotion of solar energy in Spiti Valley to reduce fuel wood consumption and carbon emissions of the local community (these ranges from solar passive houses, green houses and solar cookers). They also work on other live hood initiates from the regions herbs & berries. If time permits we can stop at seabuckthorn processing unit to get an insight in their initiate aimed at empowering the women of Spiti. Overnight in Home stay or Monastery Guest House.

#### **Day 07: Tabo – Giu via Pin Valley (4 hr)**

Today we drive for Tabo, famous for its 1012 old Monastery. In 1996 the Tabo monastery celebrated its 1000 years with Kalachakra ceremony, which was presided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We spend time exploring the Monastery and the numerous paintings and statues at the monastery, before we leave for Giu (about 1 hour drive). Giu is the furthest and most isolated village of Spiti, lying close to Tibet (China). Giu village is also interesting as the body of an old monk (675 years old) sitting in meditation still exist intact till date. It is said that the hair and nails of this monk are still growing. Then we go to Pin Valley, though a paradise of Spiti is quite different in terms of culture & Topography. It is also famous for its horses (The Chumurti Horses) and the Bhuchens. The Bhuchens area unique and rare sect of Tibet and Buddhist theatrical artist that preach religious, social and ecological morals to the locals. Followers of Tholdan Gyalpa invented this art in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century and they are now found in the Spiti Valley. Overnight in Home stay or monastery Guest House.

### **Day 08: Pin – Dhankar**

Today we drive in the morning along the Pin River which meets in Attergo with the Spitian main River which flows towards and meet in Kinnaur with Satluj in Ka. After we drive to Dhankhar and overnight at the hotel.

### **Day 09: Dhankhar to Lhalung to Demul (3 hr)**

Today we drive to Dhankhar, the ancient capital of Spiti with houses of ancient Monastery perched precariously between unique winds eroded structures. There is the remaining of the Dhankhar Fort, house of the royal family of Spiti. We visit the Monastery, Fort and subsidiary temples leaves one spell bound at the traditional architectural marvels. The Monastery has some interesting wall murals and thangkas. The Dhankhar Monastery has been recognized as one of the 100 Most Endangered sites in the World, by 'The World's Monument Fund'. Efforts are being made for restoration and conservation of the Monastery structure, murals and thangkas. This conservation initiative is also being linked to live hood generation of the village community and monastery from tourism, in order to provide them with an incentive to the inhabitants. An hour trek above Dhankhar is a spectacular blue – green lake amidst pink- brown hills. We can get up early in the morning and visit the lake. After Dhankhar we head for Lhalung which is the largest village of the Lingti Valley (a tributary of the Spiti River). It is famous for its 1000 year old temple 'Sarkhang' (the golden temple) and possibly one of the oldest trees (dating back to over a 1000 years) in Spiti are found here. Lhalung is also famous for the culture and here we participate and witness a Cultural programme accompanied by songs played by the musicians using their traditional instruments. Ecosphere is promoting these art forms to ensure their conservation and as a source of income generation for the local community especially the women and musicians (belonging to the lower castes) as well as to enable an enhancement in their social status. Overnight at home stay.

### **Day 10: Demul – Komik (5 hr)**

Today we adopt the local mode of transport, yaks. Here we explore the Trans-Himalayan Deserts and travel into the grazing pastures of the local livestock and wild

herbivores (such as the Blue Sheep). This is also the hunting ground for the Himalayan Wolf and Snow Leopard. If lucky, spotting of the Wolf can be possible. We will also learn of the conservation efforts of Ecosphere with the local community to conserve this unique and endangered wildlife. The trail also gives insights into the floral diversity of the region. We will continue to the village of Komik which is Asia's highest village where we halt for the night stay in a home stay.

### **Day 11: Komik – Hikkim – Langza – Kaza (3 hr)**

Today we drive for Komik, adorned by a legendary monastery. After visiting the Monastery we get back to our waiting jeeps, on the way we visit the ruins of the ancient monastery deserted a few decades ago close to the village of Hikkim (1/2 hr). The monastery has a unique legendary location and the locals have interesting interpretations about it. We then drive for Langza (1/2 hour) located in a large high mountain meadow with a beautiful mountain, Chau Chau Kang Nilda, towering above this village. Here we take a short trek (1 hour) to the village fossil centre where one can find evidence of fossils of sea life dating back to 200 million years when this region was submerged under the sea. The fossil centre has been formed by the village youth of Langza and Ecosphere to help preserve Spiti's geological wealth. Langza village has a unique temple which is regarded as the headquarters of all the Gods and Goddesses of the region. On numerous occasions the Gods are invoked by the villagers to pass judgement and unresolved issues. From here we head back to Kaza for the night stay. Once we are in Kaza, we will take time to relax and refresh ourselves. Time can also be spent roaming the Kaza market to shop for local handicrafts. Overnight at the hotel.

### **Day 12: Kaza to Manali (11 hr)**

After an early (7 am) breakfast we drive back to Manali along the same route that we took to reach Kaza over the Kunzum La and Rohtang La.

### **Day 13: Manali to Rewalsar (133 km / 6 hr)**

Today we drive for Rewalsar Lake, Buddhist call this by the name of Tso Pema. Shaped like a square with a shoreline of 735 Mts. this dark jewel rests on a mountain spur and is protected by a variety of dense vegetation. The spot is held as the scared place for Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhist. Legend says that in the history of Tantrik Buddhism, Padmasambhava, used his enormous powers to fight to Tibet from Rewalsar, also known as Guru Rinpoche, the precious master, it is under Padmasambhava's influence that Mahayana Buddhism took root in Tibet. The small lake is revered by Tibetan Buddhist and every year, shortly after the Tibetan New Year (sometime in March); many people make pilgrim here, especially those from Dharamshala, Kinnaur and Lahaul & Spiti. The festival known as Tso – Pema, is particularly important in the year of Monlay, which falls in every 12 years. At this time there are thousands of people here and the Dalai Lama gives Puja (Prayer) in the monastery and then does a circuit around the Lake and Kinnaurites sing a particular song. There are three Buddhist Monasteries at Rewalsar. There is Gurudwara that was built in 1930 by Raja Joginder Sen of Mandi, commemorating the month long stay of Guru Gobind Singh in 1738. There are three Hindu temples at Rewalsar dedicated to Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva and

to the sage Lamas, A small zoo near the Lake. The Lake of Kunt Bhyog (1750 mts above sea level) lies above Rewalsar, as do six other lakes of Legends. These are associated with the escape of the Pandavas from the burning Palace of wax- an episode from the epic Mahabharata.

**Day 14: Rewalsar (Chhu Pema) to Chandigarh to Delhi (240 km / 6 hr)**

Today evening we catch the Shatabdi train chair car to New Delhi, about five hr drive from Rewalsar to Chandigarh and four hr takes from Chandigarh to New Delhi by train.