

Chamba

Chamba, the valley of milk and honey is known for its streams, meadows, temples, paintings, rumal (handkerchief) and lakes. Chamba has few rivals for its scenic beauty. Chamba is situated at an altitude of 926 metres. and spreads in the area of 24 km. There are three well defined ranges in the district - The Dhauladhar range, the Pangi or Pir Panjal range and Zanskar range. Located on the banks of the Ravi river the township resembles an Italian village fortress. Chamba's temples are mostly dedicated to Lord Shiva and Vishnu and are built of richly engraved stone. The town is also the base for Gaddi shepherds who, though nomadic in their way of life, return to Chamba periodically to stock supplies. Chamba is so sheltered by snow-clad mountain barriers that its monuments escaped destruction at the hands of invaders, which is why it still remains one of the best preserved heartlands of the Himalayan arts.

Chamba : General Information

Altitude : from 610 meters to 6,400 meters.

Headquarter : Chamba (altitude 1006 metres)

Location : Chamba is situated in the western Himalayas between north latitudes 32° 10' and 33° 13' and east longitudes 75° 45' and 77° 33'. The Chamba district touches the boundaries with Jammu and Kashmir on the North-West and West, Ladakh area of Jammu and Kashmir and Lahaul and Bara Banghal on the North-East and East, Kangra on the South-East and Gurdaspur district of Punjab on the South.

Access by Air : Nearest airport is Gaggal (Kangra) 135 km. and Amritsar 220 km.

Access by Rail : The nearest broad gauge railway station is at Pathankot 120 km.

Access by Road : Almost each and every part of the state is linked by roads.

Distance : Shimla 378 km., Mandi 334 km., Manali 470 km., Kangra 180 km., Delhi 640 km., Jammu 245 km., Amritsar 245 km., and Haridwar 610 km., Manimahesh Lake 100 km., Bharmaur 65 km.,

Famous Places around Chamba :

Kailash Manimahesh :- (4,170 metres) Mani-Mahesh is 28 kms. from Bharmour. During mela days efficient bus service is available upto Hadsar. This lake is supposed to be blessed by goddess Kali and protected by Lord Shiva. Thousands of pilgrims journey here to bathe in its sacred water, on the fifteenth day, following the festival of Janamashtami. A fair is held every

year at this lake during the month of August or September. This is the must seen place in Chamba.

Bhuri Singh Museum :- This is a veritable store house of exquisite paintings of the famous Kangra and Basholi schools, as well as mass epigraphical material on the history of Chamba. the museum also has in it, wood carving, ancient manuscripts and Murals from Rang Mahal. Temples :- Chamba has numerous ancient temples patterned in the style of local hill architecture, as well as Shikhara temples. The main groups of of these temples, Lakshminarayan, as well as most in the region are dedicated to Lord Shiva and Vishnu, built in the period between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D. The 'Chaturmukhi' image is a major highlight at the Hari Rai Temple. Some other important temples of Chamba are the Bansi Gopal temple, Shri Bajreshwari temple and Chamunda Devi temple. There is also a shrine dedicated to the memory of Rani Suhi who, as the legend, sacrificed herself, so water could to the town Chamba.

Chaugan :- A public promenade - a grassy maidan less than 1 km. in length and about 75 metres wide. It is a busy local trading centre for villagers from the surrounding hills. Each year Chaugan is the site for the Minjar procession (Minjar Mela). The fair lasts for a week and people attend the fair in the Minjar procession. The fair lasts for a week and people attend the fair in the local customs and colorful dresses, in a gay mood walking in the Chaugan where a large number of sports and cultural activities take place to commemoratethis occasion. On the conclusion of fair the "Minjars" are immersed into the Ravi river. It is also an establishment base for various exciting treks into the valley around.

Bandal :- (78 km.) A lush green place, this is the meeting point for the borders of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

Salooni :- (56 km.) with an excellent views of the surrounding hills, Salooni is located on a ridge at the entrance to Bhandal valley.

Katasan Devi Temple :- (20 km.) This is a very popular temple with the local people and

commands impressive views.

Sarol :- (8 km.) A picnic spot in a landscaped garden on the left bank of Ravi river. A tourist can get a lot of information and also pleasure in visiting the sprawling horticulture farm, with many species of citrus plants, Sheep breeding farm, Poultry farm, Bee keeping farm and canning unit of Sarol.

Bharmour :- (2,195 metres) 69 km.) Bharmour was the original capital of the state of Chamba. It has several ancient temples and monuments that reflect its erstwhile glory. Some of the important temples are of - Manimahesh, Lakshna Devi, Ganesh and Nar Singh. This region is also home to Semi-nomadic Shepherds, the Gaddis. Once called Brahmpura, still retains its 84 (Chaurasi) ancient temples and the monuments of its one time glory, some of which date back to the 7th century A.D.

Shakti Devi Temple :- (40 km. from Bharmour) located at Chatrari. This temple is of great archaeological interest. The brass idol of the goddess is in the Kashmiri style.

Pangi Valley :- (167 km. from Bharmour) Pangi valley is a rugged country, severe in its topography, with high steep mountains and little vegetation. Pangi is the house of beautiful people and of colorful folk dances. The headquarters of the Pangi Sub-Division is at 'Kilar' located in deep, narrow hills by the Chenab river.

Laxmi Narayan Temple :- Laxmi Narayana Temple, which is the main temple of Chamba town was built by Sahil Varman in the 10th century AD. The temple has been built in the Shikhara style. The temple consists of Bimana i.e. Shikhara and GarbhGriha with a small antralya. Laxmi Narayana Temple has a mandapa like structure also. The wooden Chhattrees, the shell roof, atop the temple were in response to the local climatic conditions as a protection against snowfall. There are several other temples within the complex. The temple of Radha Krishna, Shiva Temple of Chandergupta and Gauri Shankar Temple are among these.

Champavati Temple :- This temple is located behind the City Police Post and Treasury building. This temple was built by Raja Sahil Varman in memory of his daughter Champavati who is believed to have influenced her father to set-up Chamba at its present location. The temple is in the Shikhara style with elaborate stone carving and the wheel roof. The size of this temple is equivalent to the largest of the Laxmi Narayana Temple.

Vajreshwari Temple :- This ancient temple is believed to be 1000 years old and is dedicated to Devi Vajreshwari-Goddess of lightning. The temple is situated on the northern most corner of the town at the end of Jansali Bazar. No historical record of the temple is available. The temple is built in the Shikhara style with wooden Chhatries and stands on the platform. The Shikhara of the temple is elaborately carved. There are two other minor temples on either side of the main shrine.

Chamunda Devi Temple :- This temple is located on the spur of the Shah Madar Hill overlooking the town to its south east. The temple stands on a raised platform. The temple has artistic carvings on its lintel, pillars and the ceiling. Behind the main temple is a small shrine of Lord Shiva in the Shikhara style. There is another platform in front of this temple where two very old peepul trees provide shelter to the visitors. From this platform a bird's eye view of most of the land marks in the town including Chaugan, Circuit House, most of the temples and river Ravi can be had. The temple is being looked after by Archaeological Survey of India. This temple can be approached by road from Chamba (3 km.). The temple is an ideal picnic spot throughout the year because it has an easy approach and a commanding view.

Hari Rai Temple :- This temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and dates back to 11th century. It was probably built by Salabahana. This temple lies in the north-west corner of the main Chaugan, which had become the official entrance to the town by the end of 19th C. A steep path leads to the old Shitla bridge, which was constructed in the year 1894. The temple is built in Shikhara style and stands on a stone platform. The Shikhara of the temple is finely carved. This is one of the major old temples, which is away from the old township and the only one near the Chaugan.