

Lahaul Spiti

Lahaul-Spiti became the district of Himachal Pradesh in 1960 and is one of the frontier districts of India. It is 120 km. away from Manali and has snow fed glaciers and barren mountains. Keylong is the headquarter of Lahaul-Spiti and oasis of green fields. The two valleys at Lahaul and Spiti have a tenuous link over the Kunzam Pass (4,520 metres). The two twin valleys, Lahaul and Spiti in the North-Eastern corner of Himachal, protected by distance is a region of nature at its wildest which has lent it much enchantment. The threshold of one of the Lahaul plateau is nourished by the Chandra and Bhaga rivers and is surrounded by high mountains on all sides, the Great Himalayas to the North, the Pir Panjal to the South and the Spiti and Chandra watershed to the East. Lahaul has curious mixture of Buddhist and Hinduism. There are a number of Monasteries and Temples.

Lahaul Spiti : General Information

Altitude : 3,165 meters.

Headquarter : Keylong (3,165 meters)

Location : Situated between 31°44'57" and 32°59'57" North Latitude and between 76°46'29" and 78°41'34" East Longitudes. To its North lies Jammu and Kashmir, to the East is Tibet, to South-East is Kullu and Kinnaur and to South-West and West is Chamba.

Access by Air : The sole access to Lahaul-Spiti lies over the 3,978 metres high Rohtang Pass. The high Rohtang Pass is at the top of the Kullu valley near Manali.

Access by Rail : The sole access to Lahaul-Spiti lies over the 3,978 metres high Rohtang Pass. The high Rohtang Pass is at the top of the Kullu valley near Manali.

Access by Road : The sole access to Lahaul-Spiti lies over the 3,978 metres high Rohtang Pass. The high Rohtang Pass is at the top of the Kullu valley near Manali.

Distance : Distance between Keylong and Manali is 115 km. And distance between Keylong and Shimla (via Kunzum Pass) is 610 km.

Famous Places around Lahaul Spiti :

Keylong :- (3,340 meters) located above Bhaga river, the district headquarters of Lahaul-Spiti has been described as oasis of green fields, willow planted water courses, brown hills and snowy peaks. In the past, Keylong was home of the Moravian missionaries. There well known monasteries, Tayul, Khardong, and Shashur are within a few kilometers radius.

Khoksar :- (3,140 meters) a break and windswept place is the first village and gateway to Lahaul and on the right bank of the river Chandra 5 kms. from ' **amphoo'**.

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During winter Khoskar is the coldest inhabited place in Lahaul. The river freezes during winter and is covered with snow to afford regular passage for human beings and also for mule traffic. Khoksar is located on the old trade route from Indian plains to the west Asia.

Tandi :- (2,573 meters) is situated at the confluence of Chamba and Bhaga rivers. A legend says that there were two lovers, 'Chandra', the daughter of the Moon and 'Bhaga', the son of the Sun god. To perform their eternal marriage, they dedicated to climb to the 'Baralacha La' and from there they ran in opposite directions. Chandra being active and smart, easily found her way down the pass and reached 'Tandi'. Soon Bhaga was found coming with great struggle through the narrow gorges to Tandhi, where ultimately both met and the celestial marriage was performed. Tandhi's importance for the people of Lahaul is same as it is 'Haridwar' for the Hindus.

Gondhla :- (3,160 meters) is located on the river bank of the river Chandra. House of the thakur of Gondhla, called Gondhla castle or fort, is the main attraction. According to district gazetteer, this was built in 1700 A.D. by Raja of Kullu Man Singh whose influence stretched upto the Lingti Plains beyond the Baralacha-La. But present Thakur Fateh Chand says that it was 20 generations old. This is eight story building. Raja Man Singh of Kullu had stayed there in 1720 A.D. while on his way to Trilokinath Temple. Remains of the past are lying there. Age old costumes, furniture and idols are also strewn around in a state of neglect. The 'Sharab Raldi' i.e. 'Sword of Wisdom' given to the Thakur by Dalai Lama in the past is also there in the possession of present Thakur. This sword seems to have been built in the 'Toledo' technique of Spain. In the month of July a fair is held when Lamas dance and enjoy. This fair attracts a large number of visitors.

Jispa :- It is in Lahaul valley, located on the bank of Bhaga river. There is a big camping ground. Sufficient trout fish is available in the river.

Darcha :- (3,360 meters) It is in Lahaul valley from where trekkers start their trek to Padam via Singola as well as Baralacha/Phirtsela. Beyond this point there are hardly any trees. Yotche and Zanskar nallahs meet Bhaga river here from different directions.

Baralacha La Pass :- (4,883 meters) It is in Lahaul valley, 73 kms. from Keylong. The name Baralacha means 'Pass with cross roads on summit' (Roads from Ladakh, Spiti and Lahaul join on the top of it). There is no road yet from Spiti, only a path exists. This pass is also an origin of Chandra, Bhaga and Yamuna rivers. They flow to three different directions, through the Chandra, Bhaga and Lingti valleys.

Sarchu :- is the last border point in Lahaul valley between Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shansha :- It is situated on the right bank of river Chandra and Bhaga (chenab) in Lahaul valley. The 'Ghepan' a powerful deity of Lahaul is believed to be born there. A shrine dedicated to the deity has also been built in the village.

Udaipur :- (2,743 meters) In olden times this village was known as 'Markul' and so the name of the local goddess is 'Markula Devi. Her temple is unique and is very famous for its wooden carvings on its roof and ceiling. This place is therefore a starting point for Mayur valley and further to Zaskar and other peaks.

Kunzum Pass :- (4,590 metres) As Rohtang pass is a gateway to Lahaul so Kunzum pass is the gateway to Spiti from Kulu & Lahaul. After crossing Rohtang pass and driving 20kms, one has to turn right from Gramphoo. While going to this pass, the panoramic view of Bara-Sigri glacier (second longest glacier in the world) is thrilling and inspiring. The crest of the pass has been marked by a chorten of stones erected ages ago. Kunzum Pass provides chief access to Lahaul valley by the great Kumzum range. The lofty Bara Shigri glacier is seen in front in all its grandeur. The crest of the pass has been marked by a chorten of stones erected ages ago. Recently a temple has been built on the top dedicated to 'Lord Gyephang' - the chief deity of Lahaul. The belief is that, every vehicle passing over Kunzum pass will have to take a round (Parikrama) of this temple to get blessing of the God. Another interesting feature of the stone image of the Lord is that offerings in the form of cash (coin or currency notes) will stick to the image, if devotee is acceptable to the Lord. Some people believe that this temple is of goddess Durga.s

Chandertaal Lake : Batal-Chandra Tal: Walking Time 6-7 hrs.> It takes a day to reach Batal 3950m from Manali. Pir Panjal and Baralacha La merges at Kunzum La and Batal is nestled in it's footsteps. Situated at 4250m Chandra Tal is a magical experience for many.

Kaza :- (3,800 meters) It is sub-divisional headquarters of Spiti valley. It is situated at the foot of the steep ridges on the left bank of Spiti river. Once it was the headquarters of the 'Nano' the chief of Spiti. It is 425 kms. from Shimla. Kaza has a filling station, rest house and small hotels. It serves as the base for excursions in the area. Among others, the Ki, Hikkim, Komik and Langia monasteries are at hand.

Ki-Monastery :- (4,116 metres) It is 12 km. from Kaza by road. It is the oldest and the biggest monastery of Spity dominating Ki-Village. About 300 lamas are receiving their religious training in its monastery, which houses rare paintings and beautiful scriptures of Buddha and other gods and goddesses. It is serving western population of Spiti. It is regarded as the largest in the sub-division. It is a collection of rooms and a labyrinth of corridors that do not follow any defined plan, but seem to have grown over the years. No definite data can be ascribed to the construction of the gompa - that acted both as a monastery and as a fort.

Kibbar Village : (4,205 meters) Locally known as Khyipur, one of the highest villages in the world at an altitude of 4,205 meters above sea level in a narrow valley surrounded by mountains from all sides. 'Gette village' at a short distance away from Kaza is the highest in the world, with a height of 4,270 meters. It also acts as the base for several high altitude treks.

Tabo (village and monastery) : - At the right of Spiti river, is an ancient village named Tabo, flanked on either side by lofty brown hills and sun burnt, is the seat of one of the most famous Buddhist monasteries - Sherlang, Duang, Chamba, Chibbo, Domlang Gompas, regarded by many as only next to the Thelong Gompa in Tibet. The 10th Century Tabo monastery houses more than 60 lamas. Large number of scriptures and pieces of art, wall paintings - 'Tankhas' and 'Stucco'.

Pin Valley : It is formed by the Pin river, which rises on the eastern slopes of Pin Parbati pass and meets the Spity river exactly opposite Lingti village. On its way it is joined by the 'Parahio Nala' near Pokchung. From Pin valley one can cross over to the Kullu valley over Pin Parbati peak and to the district of Kinnaur via 'Shakarof Pass' or 'Tarikhango pass'. Pin valley is much more rugged and barren than the main Spiti valley. This valley is famous for Ibex and Snow Leopard. The whole Pin valley, including all the villages, forms the protected area, varying in

altitude from 3,600 to 6,632 meters above sea level. The Pin valley can boast of being somewhat moist area during the summer months, in sharp contrast to much of the remnant arid Spiti.

Lingti Valley : Largest and the longest side valley of Spiti. It runs North-East from Lingti village (3,460 meters) for about 60 kms. to its head. It is a living geological museum. Its geological history dates back to 250 million years and its shales and fossils are well known to all the world. 'Gya Peak' is also there in Lingti valley. At its summit Spiti, Ladakh and Tibet meet.

Nako : (3,662 meters) It is also located in Kinnaur district and is the highest village in the valley and the existence of lake formed out of the masses of ice and snow above adds to beauty of the village. Village deity is 'Deo-dum' and another Lagang temple with several idols exist there. It is situated about 2 kms. above the Hangrang valley road and is 103 kms. from Kalpa on the western direction of the huge mountain of Pargial.

Kalpa (Kinnaur) : (2,670 meters) Once a favourite hunt of Lord Dalhousie, the district headquarters till recently, when the headquarter was shifted to 'Rekong Peo' (1,900 meters) was the venue of Kalchakra Sermon delivered in August 1992 by His Holiness "The Dalai Lama" ; and a monastery to commemorate this auspicious occasion was built up is 13 kms. short of Kalpa and 7 kms. off the Powari on Hindustan - Tibet Road. Looming in front of Kalpa is an impressive view of 'Kinner Kailash' directly across the Satluj river. This mountain changes colors several times a day with a change of weather conditions or may be as destined by Lord Shiva his eternal abode. 'Parvati Kund' is located on the top of Kinner Kailash. The ancient villages of Pangri, Moorang and Kanum are situated close to Kalpa.

Sangla Valley : This valley starts 57 km short of Kalpa which has been named after a beautiful & populous village Sangla. Sangla is situated on the right bank of Baspa river 17 kms. from Karcham. Journey from Karcham onwards is enjoyable and adventurous throughout the valley. The natural scenery all around and the eternal snow view are picturesque and charming. It is also known as Baspa Valley since Baspa river flows through this area. This is the most charming valley in the entire District of Kinnaur. A temple dedicated to Nages god is worth a visit & other places are Sapni, Rackchham, Kilba, Kamru Fort which can also be visited. There are post offices, banks, rest houses for the convenience of the visitors.

Rakchham : (2,900 meters) It is in Kinnaur and it is located on the right bank of the Baspa river. Its name has been derived from 'Rak' a stone and 'Chham' a bridge. It is one of the most beautiful villages of Baspa Valley. The location of the village is striking.

Chitkul : This is the last and highest village in the Baspa valley. It is situated on the right bank of Baspa river. There is a road along the left bank from Karcham. There are 3 temples of local goddess Mathi, the main ones are said to have been constructed about 500 years ago.