HILL STATIONS TO THE HIMALAYAS

20 days
What's included

- Arrival & departure transfers
- Ground transport with driver
- Accommodation
- Meals (refer to itinerary for meal plan)
- Leh-Delhi domestic flight in economy class
- English-speaking guides
- Entrance fees to sites & parks

What's not included

- International & domestic flights
- Meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Drinks
- Visa fees
- Tipping
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- Camera / video camera fees
- Personal items (laundry, telephone, etc.)
- Medical expenses
- Any services not mentioned in itinerary

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.
HILL STATIONS TO THE HIMALAYAS

Your Itinerary Map
Your Itinerary Explained

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place visited</th>
<th>Meals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>B: Breakfast</td>
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The first part of the text in each day is the itinerary schedule and will explain what you will normally see/do during this day of your itinerary.

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The part of the day's text in italics (and comes after the three dashes “---”) is background information on the places or sites on that day of your itinerary. It is not part of your itinerary and may mention places that will not be visited on your itinerary. If you have any questions please ask us. Travel times where noted are only meant as a guideline.

Tour Itinerary

Day 1  Arrival  Meals

Arrive into Delhi airport where you will be met by a Travel The Unknown representative and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day will be at your leisure. Overnight in Delhi.

Overnight in Claridges, Delhi

Day 2  Delhi - Haridwar  Meals

In the early morning, transfer to the railway station to connect with your train to Haridwar. One of our representatives will meet you on arrival to transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to relax or explore. Overnight in Haridwar.

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Haridwar is an ancient city situated on the banks of the River Ganges whose name is translated to mean 'gateway to God'. It is one of the most holy Hindu cities, thought to be one of the four sites where drops of immortality were spilled. It is home to many festivals including Purna Kumbh Mela, which is held every 12 years, where pilgrims come together to bathe in the river Ganges and wash away their sins.

Overnight in The Haveli Hari Ganga, Haridwar
Day 3
Haridwar

Enjoy a full day sightseeing tour of Haridwar and Rishikesh. Visit Lakshman Jhoola bridge before proceeding to Mansi Devi Temple and Shanti Kunj Ashram. In the evening, there is an opportunity to witness Ganga Aarti at sunset. Overnight in Haridwar.

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The city of Rishikesh is known as the ‘gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas’. Many saints have visited this holy city to meditate in search of higher knowledge, today Rishikesh is renowned as yoga capital of the world. Due to its religious significance this national heritage city has prohibited alcohol and non-vegetarian food.

The majestic bridge of Lakshman Jhoola hangs 70 feet above the River Ganges with a length of 450 feet. According to myth, Lord Rama’s younger brother crossed the river on a jute rope-bridge at the same site where the bridge now stands. After the erosion of this jute bridge, a new iron bridge was built in its place in 1939. The old Lakshman Temple is situated on the western bank, while other attractions such as the School of Yoga and Meditation and the white water rafting camp at Shivpuri are located upstream.

Perched atop the Sivalik Hills, Mansi Devi Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to the goddess Mansa Devi. With “Mansa” meaning wish, it is believed that the goddess fulfills the wishes of devotees who present offerings of coconuts, fruits, garlands and incense sticks, or tie threads to the branches of a tree located in the temple. Once the wishes are fulfilled, the threads are untied from the tree.

Literally meaning "Prayer for Ganga", the Ganga Aarti is a spectacular religious ceremony in which offerings are made to the Lord Shiva and the River Ganges. At sunset, Pilgrims gather on the banks of the Ganges and offer plates of flowers and flaming ghee while temple bells ring and mantras are chanted. The aftermath of the ceremony is a wonderful sight, with hundreds of floating miniature lamps and flowers placed into the river.

Overnight in The Haveli Hari Ganga, Haridwar

Day 4
Haridwar - Shimla

Drive to Shimla and check in to your hotel on arrival. The rest of the day is free to explore at your leisure. Overnight in Shimla.

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Shimla is the capital city of the northern state of Himachal Pradesh. In 1864 it was declared the summer capital of British India. It is built on a panoramic location, over several hills and connecting ridges, surrounded by green pastures and snowy peaks. It retains its colonial heritage, with grand old buildings and Anglo-Saxon names.

Overnight in The Oberoi Cecil, Shimla
## Day 5  Shimla - Taradevi - Shimla

In the morning, enjoy a Toy Train ride from Shimla to Taradevi. After the ride, drive back to Shimla for a sightseeing tour. Being with a visit to the Viceregal Lodge before heading to a Hindu Temple containing shrines to various Hindi gods. Enjoy a leisurely stroll back along the Mall to Scandal Point. En route, it may be possible to look inside the Gaiety Theatre, or alternatively find a spot for refreshments whilst viewing the snow-capped Himalayan peaks if the weather is clear. The evening is free to rest or explore at your leisure. Overnight in Shimla.

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*Built in 1888, the Viceregal Lodge was the official summer residence of the British viceroys, from which the Indian subcontinent was ruled until World War Two. A symbol of the British Empire, it is built in mock-Tudor style, with the wooden interior decor still in its original state. The building now holds the Institute for Advanced Studies, with an 180,000-volume library occupying the old ballroom, dining room and drawing room.*

*Overnight in The Oberoi Cecil, Shimla*

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## Day 6  Shimla

Today is free at your leisure. There are optional tours than can be booked and paid locally, including excursions to: the quaint town of Mashobra and its forest; the former capital of the Maharajah of Patiala, Chail, with the highest cricket pitch in the world; or Naldehra. There are other walks and treks also available organised by the hotel. Overnight in Shimla.

*Overnight in The Oberoi Cecil, Shimla*

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## Day 7  Shimla - Pragpur

Drive to Pragpur where you will check in to the hotel on arrival. The rest of the day is free to relax or explore. Overnight in Pragpur.

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*The scenic village of Pragpur can be found in the foothills of the Himalayas, 1,800ft over sea level amongst snowy mountains. It holds some key sights of interest, including the Kuthiala Soods Ancestral Home and Radha Krishna shrine. The village offers the perfect environment to enjoy activities such as fishing, bird watching and hiking.*

*Overnight in Judge’s Court, Pragpur*
Day 8  Pragpur - Amritsar

Drive to Amritsar and check in to the hotel on arrival. The afternoon is free at your leisure. In the evening, proceed to the Golden Temple to witness the holy Palki ceremony. Overnight in Amritsar.

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The city of Amritsar boasts the famous Golden Temple, located in the heart of the city. Amritsar is at the epicentre of the Sikh faith, where the Golden Temple is the holiest of Sikh shrines. For Sikhs it is both a display of Punjab’s wealth and an important pilgrimage. People from all faiths gather at the Golden Temple, a tribute to the traditions of a faith whose holy book is a compilation of the writings of men of different faiths.

The Palki Ceremony takes place every evening at the Golden Temple. During the ceremony, the Granth Sahib (the Sikh Holy Book) is carried from the main shrine in Hari Mandir (the Divine Temple) to the sanctum, where it stays until the opening ceremony the next morning. Many people take part in the ceremony, with devotees queuing behind the palanquin on which the Holy Book is carried and taking turns in supporting each arm. Overnight in Hyatt Amritsar, Amritsar

Day 9  Amritsar - Wagah Border - Amristar

After breakfast, explore the Golden Temple and see the community kitchen (langar) where volunteers feed 30,000 people daily for free. Later, visit the historic Jallianwala Bagh, commemorating the hundreds of innocent Indians killed or wounded in the most notorious massacre under the British rule. Also see the beautiful Ram Bagh Gardens. In the afternoon, enjoy an excursion to Wagah Border to witness the change of the guard ceremony between Indian and Pakistani armies. Overnight in Amritsar.

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The Wagah Border, marks the border between India and Pakistan, where each evening a retreat ceremony called ‘lowering of the flags’ takes place. This has been happening since 1959. The soldiers (the Border Security Force of India and the Pakistani Rangers) indulge in an energetic parade, in what first may appear slightly aggressive and even hostile to people watching it for the first time! However, the paraders are meant to be imitating the pride and anger of a cockerel. Donning colourful turbans, the troops of each country put on a show you will never forget.

The Jallianwala Bagh memorial was established in 1951 to commemorate the 1919 massacre of peaceful Punjabi New Year celebrators when British occupying forces opened fire. Some bullet holes are still visible in the walls. An eternal (24-hour) flame burns as a sign of remembrance, as well as an exhibition telling the stories of victims and a Martyrs’ Gallery with portraits of Independence heroes.

Overnight in Hyatt Amritsar, Amritsar
### Day 10  
**Amritsar - Dharamsala**

In the morning, drive to Dharamsala, the home of the Dalai Lama and a major Buddhist site. On arrival, check in to the hotel. The rest of the day is free at your leisure. Overnight in Dharamsala.

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Dharamsala is situated in the upper reaches of the Kangra Valley and surrounded by dense coniferous forest. The hill-station town is best known as the home of the exiled Dalai Lama and the centre of the Tibetan exile world in India. The town is a centre for Tibetan arts and crafts, boasting several art galleries and an annual international film festival. The Dalai Lama temple and other Buddhist monasteries are set in beautiful and serene surroundings. Overnight in Fortune Park Moksha, Dharamsala

### Day 11  
**Dharamsala**

After breakfast, proceed for a full day guided tour of Dharamsala. Visit the Dalai Lama Temple and Bhagsu Nag Temple. Also visit the Norbulingka Institute and its small museum. Later, proceed to Kangra State Museum. The rest of the day is free to explore McLeod Ganj at your leisure. Overnight in Dharamsala.

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Bhagsu Nag Temple can be found in the heart of Bhagsunag village at an altitude of 6,960 feet, with beautiful views over the valley. Constructed around 1800, it is dedicated to the Lord Shiva and the local deity Bhagsu Nag. Buddhist monks and visitors can enjoy a relaxing dip in a series of pools within the temple complex, or at the spectacular 20-metre-high Bhagsunag waterfall located behind the temple. The waterfall is most impressive during the monsoon season when the cascade is in full flow.

Kangra State Museum provides a fascinating insight into Kangra Valley's rich cultural past, displaying arts, crafts and artifacts dating back to the 5th century. Exhibits range from Kangra's famous miniature paintings, to collections of sculptures, pottery and anthropological items. There are also copies of paintings by the 20th century Russian artist Nicholas Roerich, renowned for his vivid Himalayan mountain landscapes.

Sitting on the edge of a cliff and surrounded by high walls, the Dalai Lama Temple offers beautiful views overlooking the valley. Not only is it the place of residence of the Dalai Lama, but it also holds the offices of the Tibetan Government in Exile. On special festive occasions, the Dalai Lama leads the public Kalchakra Ceremony, performed by Buddhist monks to promote universal peace and harmony.
### Day 12  Dharamsala - Palampur

Drive to Palampur, visiting the Kangra valley tea plantations en route. On arrival in Palampur, check in to Taragarh Palace. The evening is free to rest. Overnight in Palampur.

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The town of **Palampur**, named the ‘tea capital of northwest India’, is famed for its tea gardens. The many streams, waterways and green plains of Palampur contrast a dramatic backdrop of the Dhauladhar mountain range which remains snow covered for almost the whole year.

*Overnight in Taragarh Palace, Palampur*

### Day 13  Palampur - Manali

Drive up to Manali and check in to the hotel on arrival. The rest of the day is free at your leisure. Overnight in Manali.

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**Manali** is a small town in the Beas River Valley, positioned at an altitude of 2,050m. Surrounded by high peaks it is the perfect location for activities including trekking, mountain biking, skiing and paragliding which has made it a popular destination for tourists and backpackers alike.

*Overnight in ShivAdya, Manali*

### Day 14  Manali

In the morning, visit Nagar Castle and its Reorich Art Gallery, which displays the private collection of the paintings by the famous Russian painter Nicolas Reorich. Proceed to Old Manali and the Manu Temple. The evening is free to rest or explore. Overnight in Manali.

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Built in AD 1460, **Nagar Castle** served as the residence of Raja Sidh Singh of Kullu. It is an impressive blend of European and Himalayan architecture, combining both medieval stone and woodwork. There are three small shrines located within the premises, as well as an art gallery exhibiting spectacular paintings by the famous Russian painter Nicholas Roerich. In 1978, the building was converted into a heritage hotel.

Located on the bank of the River Beas, **Manu Temple** is a prominent place of worship for the people of Manali. It is the only temple dedicated to the sage Manu, who is believed to have meditated in this spot. According to Hindu mythology, Manu was the creator of the world and the writer of Mansumriti, the text in which the founding laws of Hinduism were laid down. Constructed in wood and stone, the temple was rebuilt in 1992 to include a vaulted ceiling and marble flooring.

*Overnight in ShivAdya, Manali*
Day 15  Manali - Sarchu

Drive to Sarchu, stopping at Rohtang Pass and Baralacha Pass en route. On arrival, check in at the camp, where the rest of the day is free. Overnight in Sarchu.

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Sarchu, also known as Sir Bhum Chun, is situated at 14,500ft between the Himalayan mountain passes of Barlacha La and Lachlung La. It provides tented accommodation as an important halfway stopover on the Leh-Manali highway, which is a high-altitude journey that normally takes travellers two days to complete.

Located at a height of 13,054 ft, the high mountain pass of Rohtang Pass provides a natural divide between the primarily Hindu culture of Kullu Valley and the Buddhist culture of the high-altitude Lahaul and Spiti Valleys, which in turn provide access to Leh. The pass offers beautiful views over Lahaul Valley, the Chandra River, and surrounding glaciers and peaks. However, unpredictable snowstorms and mudslides have given it a dangerous reputation ("Rohtang" translates to "ground of corpses", relating to the number of people who have died trying to cross it in bad weather). Consequently, the pass is closed during the heavy snowfall over winter.

Overnight in Adventure Camp, Sarchu

Day 16  Sarchu - Leh

Drive to Leh, crossing Tanglangla Pass, the second highest motorable pass in the world at 5350 metres. Enjoy the natural beauty of the mountains as you continue the drive through the plains, where there are tiny colonies of Marmots, Yaks and Herbs. Drive to the rugged Lachungla Pass at 5065 metres. On arrival in Leh, check in to the hotel, where the evening is free to rest. Overnight in Leh.

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Leh is at an elevation of 3500m above sea level, situated in the Ladakh province. The stunning Leh Palace is modelled on the Tibetan Palace in Lhasa. Some of Ladakh’s most famous and spectacular religious sites, including Sindhu Ghat where you can take a stroll by the bank of the River Indus. From there we move on to Thiksey Monastery, one of Leh’s most architecturally impressive structures clinging to the cliff-face and containing numerous stupas and murals of Lord Buddha. The former home of the Ladakhi royal family, Shey Palace and Museum is situated on a hillock and houses an impressive 7.5 metre gold statue of Lord Buddha. Hemis National Park is India’s largest national park, and the only park found in the northern Himalayas. It is home to a number of endangered species and the 400-year old Hemis Monastery.

Overnight in Ladakh Residency, Leh
Day 17  Leh  Meals

After breakfast, visit Hemis Gompa, the biggest Gompa of Ladakh. Proceed to the monastery of Thiksey Gompa and Shanti Stupa. Overnight in Leh.

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Built in 1630, the Hemis Gompa is the largest and wealthiest monastic institution in Ladakh, with more than 200 branches and over 1,000 monks in the Himalayan region. The monastery uses Tibetan-style architecture and is decorated with colourful wall paintings, gold and silver stupas, and a copper statue of Lord Buddha. It also has the largest “Thanka” (a Tibetan-Buddhist painting) in Ladakh, which is unfurled once every 12 years, symbolising good health and spiritual strength. The monastery’s population stems from the major annual Hemis Tsechu festival held within the complex every summer, in which holy masked dances glorify the victory of good over bad.

Constructed in 1430, Thiksey Gompa is one of the largest and architecturally most impressive Gompas, incorporating elements of Ladakh’s traditional architectural style. It consists of 12 storeys and holds several stupas, prayer halls and small shrines with exquisite colourful wall paintings. The main prayer hall houses a 15-metre-high seated statue of Buddha, the largest in the region.

Situated on a hill in Chhangspa village, Shanti Stupa (also known as the World Peace Pagoda) provides beautiful panoramic views of Leh town and the surrounding mountain peaks. It was built out of white marble between 1983 and 1991 by Japanese monks to promote world peace. As a result, Japanese elements are evident in the architecture, such as small clean side rooms for meditators, a Japanese garden and the main Japanese shrine at the entrance.

Overnight in Ladakh Residency, Leh

Day 18  Leh  Meals

In the morning, visit the impressive Tibetan-style Leh Palace. In the afternoon, explore the bustling Leh Bazaar before visiting Leh Jokhang and its statue of Joyo Rinpochey (crowned Buddha). Overnight in Leh.

Overnight in Ladakh Residency, Leh

Day 19  Leh - Delhi  Meals

Transfer to the airport at the appropriate time to catch your flight to Delhi. Overnight in Delhi.

We strongly recommend extending your trip across the Himalayas from Leh to Srinagar on our Himalayan Extension: Ladakh to Kashmir tour.
Overnight in Pullman Hotel Aerocity, Delhi

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<td></td>
<td>Transfer to the international airport at the appropriate time to catch your flight home.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Contact us for extensions to other parts of India.</td>
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Flight