

# HIMACHAL PRADESH



india

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*Distinctive jewellery on a Kulu maiden*

The magical power of the Himalayas is an indefinable blend of myth and reality. The silvered heights etched against the sky tower over dark gorges, stately pine forests and manicured tea gardens. The Dhauladhar range in the north and the Shivalik hills further south stand guard over the state of Himachal Pradesh. This state has rugged mountains and secluded valleys laced with streams. An atmosphere redolent of history with battles. A valley of the gods. In the far reaches of Lahaul and Spiti, ancient Buddhist monasteries. The social whirl of Simla. The invigorating hot springs at Vashisht, Tattapani and Manikaran. The thrill of the angler in landing a splendid trout in the Beas or a mahaseer in the Yamuna and Giri rivers.

Starting from the south-eastern corner of Himachal, one can embark on an enchanted trip; first to the three towns of Paonta Sahib, Renuka and Nahan. Make Simla your base to savour the delights of the little tucked away holiday resorts that surround it. Like Solan and Chail or Naldera and Narkanda. The last two are set against a background of deep forests. Winterski at Kufri or go for long walks at Kasauli.

In the heart of the valley are the hot springs of Manikaran where the god Shiva and his consort are remembered to this day in a quaint and charming legend.

The whole upward course of the river Beas is rich in glimpses of lofty mountains and spreading forests. The road from Kulu to Manali

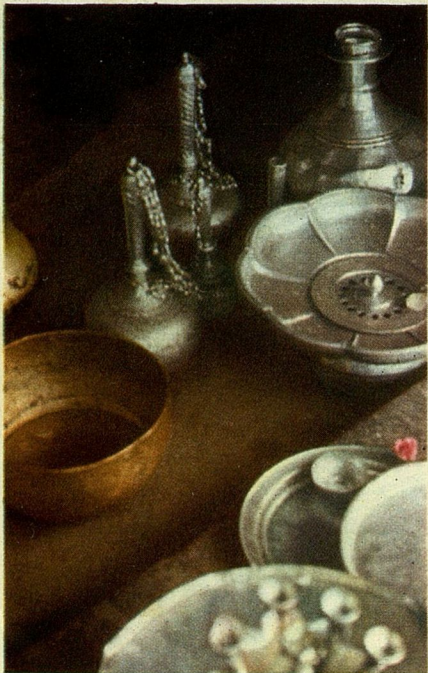
*Cover*

*Kulu gods in festive palanquins during Dussehra*



*Above A quiet pastoral scene*

*Left Gleaming devotional vessels at the temple of Raghunath ji , Kulu*



runs along the swift and rushing torrents of the river. Kulu, the principal town of the valley of the gods is just the first stop on the road to the Rohtang Pass. At Naggar, the medieval world survives untouched by time. Manali is circled by beautiful glades of deodars and flowering horse chestnuts. In one of these glades is the intricately carved wooden temple of Hadimba Devi, wreathed in myth. The road winds up through rocky gorges to the Rohtang Pass. The air is crisp and clear and as you turn a corner you might suddenly confront a spellbinding view of the Himalayas in all their might. The pass itself is lined with snow and is the gateway to the remote and mysterious Lahaul Valley.

Not all of Himachal is confined to mountain fastness, for westward of Simla are Bilaspur, Mandi and the Rewalsar Lake. Rewalsar has floating islands in the lake and is a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus.

Dharamsala stands on a spur of the Dhauladhar range. Around it are places woven into the fabric of history. Like Kangra, home of the hill school of painting. The Banganga torrent flows by a town mushroomed with temples. At Jwalamukhi is a temple to the flame goddess. Masroor has silent pools surrounded by temples with excellent sculpture.

A quiet hill station sprawling on five little hills is Dalhousie, the



*The placid Renuka Lake*

gateway to Chamba, the vale of milk and honey. Chamba seems suspended above the river Ravi. To the north east are wild and fascinating hills where the two arms of the rivers Chandra and Bhaga meet in a mighty embrace to join the river Chenab.

### **Paonta Sahib**

The river Yamuna flows through the Doon Valley and Paonta Sahib has a special connection with it. Sacred to the memory of the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, Paonta Sahib, it is believed, derives its name from the Guru having lost an ornament called "paonta" worn on the foot while bathing in the Yamuna. Another story has it that the city is so called because

Guru Gobind Singh set foot or "paon" here. Overlooking the river is the majestic Gurudwara where he wrote the major portion of the Dassam Granth. Legend has it that at the Guru's bidding the river flowed calmly at this point and remains so to this day.

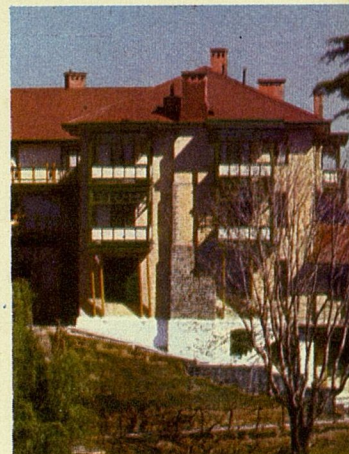
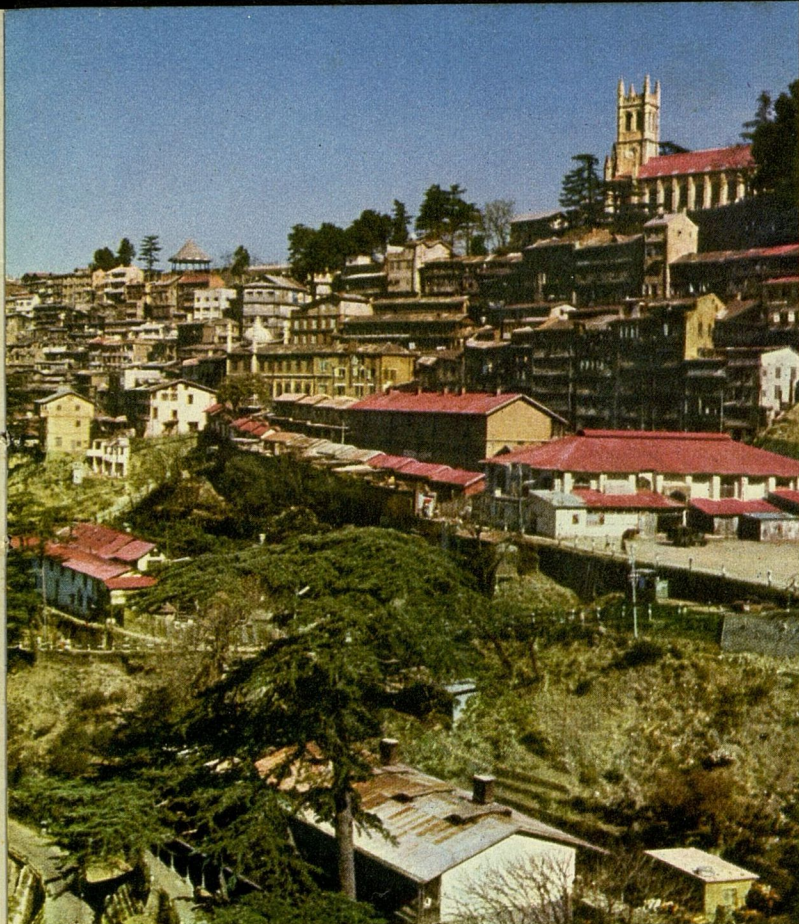
### **Nahan**

A winding road through this lush valley leads to Nahan. At an altitude of 932 metres Nahan stands on a spur of the Shivalik Hills. Nahan in Sanskrit means "invincible", yet this city could have acquired its name from "Nahar" or lion. An oft told story recalls a saint who lived with a lion on the site.

The old royal capital of Sirmuri Tal is now in ruins. It is said to have been destroyed by floods because of a court dancer's curse. Relics of Sirmuri Tal are now on display in the Circuit Houses while Shanti Sangam houses contemporary art. Chaugan, the hub of the city, is reminiscent of princely days. On the other hand three level walks, Villa Round, Hospital Round and Military Round evoke a different kind of history altogether.

### **Renuka**

Renuka, 42 km from Nahan is a lake in the shape of a sleeping woman. Renuka was killed by her son Parasuram in obedience to his father, the sage Jamdagni. She and her son are remembered in a ritual



*Above left*  
*Top right*  
*Centre right*  
*Extreme right*  
*Left*

*A view of Simla*  
*The gentle slopes of the golf links at Naldera*  
*The palace at the wooded retreat of Chail is now an hotel*  
*Wildflower Hall*  
*Circuit House, Narkanda*



every year, when, in November a fair is held on the shores of this placid lake. The area shelters a wild life sanctuary and there is also a small zoo on the shore.

## Simla

Once the summer capital of British India, where crinolined ladies strolled down the Mall on the arms of bewhiskered gentlemen. Still an elegant resort with its red-roofed chalets, half-timbered houses and gothic Government buildings framed by tall pine trees. An all-the-year place to escape to. Saunter through little bazaars where the hill folk display their wares. Walk out to the temple of Hanuman on Jakoo Hill. Picnic in the forested

Glen or at the meadow Annandale. Earn the distinction of playing cricket on the highest cricket pitch in the world at **Chail**, 45 km from Simla. Play at the nine hole golf course at **Naldera**. In winter, ski down snowy slopes at **Kufri** with the crisp mountain wind singing in your ears. Or delight in the swish of steel on ice at the skating rink in Simla, as you weave patterns to the strains of a long forgotten waltz.

Wild Flower Hall, near Kufri whippers of Kipling's Simla and viceregal days, for it was once the residence of Lord Kitchener. Now a hotel for the peace seeker. The rest house of Cragiano and the circuit house of Fair Lawns are near

the oak and pine retreat of **Mashobra**. At the sleepy hill station of **Chail** another palace is now a hotel.

**Kasauli** 77 km from Simla is for bracing long walks among pine trees with the chirp of crickets in the air. From Monkey Point one can have a grandstand view of the spread of the plains below.

"The full line of snows bursts upon one as one comes up through the little gap in the crest where the Narkanda bungalow is built" wrote an English traveller in 1845. This glorious untrammelled view is still the visitors delight as range upon range of snow stands clear and sharp before him at **Narkanda**, 64 km away.

## Rewalsar

The Rewalsar lake is the goal of many Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu pilgrims. This small sheet of water lies in a mountain hollow. A curious feature are the floating islands that drift slowly with the passing breeze.

**Bilaspur** overlooks the blue and shimmering Gobindsagar lake where the spires of submerged temples glisten in the sun.

## Mandi

The hill road continues to Mandi—the temple town. From Mandi the road leads through the cool forests at Aut, past Bajaura with its ancient temple to enter the valley of Kulu.

## Kulu

Kulu's personality changes with the seasons. The mountainscape remains spectacular whether in brilliant sunshine or the lilac haze of mist. In spring the valley orchards wear the delicate tracery of cherry and apple blossom. Blue and purple iris spike the meadows.

In summer it is ablaze with crimson rhododendrons and in autumn the

amber of ripening corn spread out of the roofs of village houses only complements the flame of the trees.

This is the time to visit Kulu. On the grassy maidan or common are assembled, in full panoply, all the valley gods for the festival of Dussehra. A hundred years ago a British administrator noted with some regret that whereas there used to be "some 360 local deities to pay their respects to the presiding shrine of Ragonath Ji; of late the attendance has fallen off, and not more than 70 to 80 of the minor divinities are now brought up".

Raghunath ji still keeps state for a week with a bevy of attendant gods, and then his chariot is ceremoniously pulled by the faithful to restore him to his temple. An air of gaiety reigns at the Dussehra fair, where one can buy anything from Kulu shawls and enamel jewellery to plum jam.

An unusual event occurs at the Bijli Mahadev temple. The temple spire attracts lightning. Each year the Shivalinga is struck and smashed to pieces. Each year the priest carefully recomposes it, sticking the parts together with butter. The next shaft of lightning will shatter it once again.

There is ample fishing in this valley laced with streams and especially good trout in the Beas.

## Naggar

At **Katrain**, cross the ice-blue river on a swaying yet surprisingly sturdy suspension bridge. And you are at Naggar, the old capital of the Rajas of Kulu. The castle of weathered stone and timber is surrounded by an aura of romance. A Kulu Rani it is said, flung herself from one of its balconies to dispel the suspicion that she had a lover in hiding. She is said to have proved her innocence by the amazing fact that as soon as her body tou-

ched the ground it turned into a figure of stone.

A walk under sweeping branches of trees will take you to an old pagoda-like wooden temple. Statues streaked with vermilion bask gently in the sun.

The Roerich museum of paintings is in a white washed villa set in a jewel-like garden.

## Manali

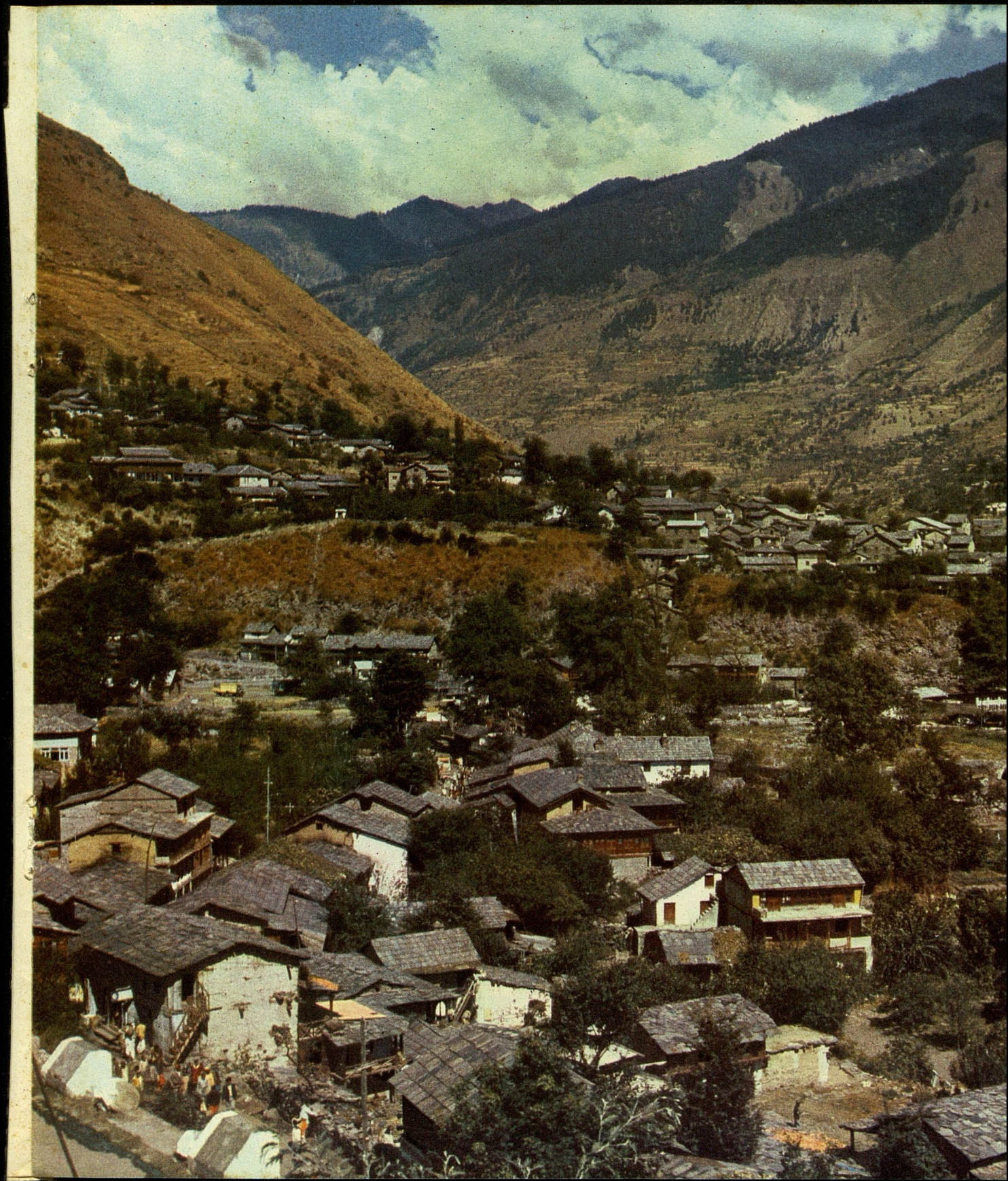
The valley narrows as it reaches Manali, where the whispering of the deodars mingles with the tumult of the river. Winding paths through forests and glades is the setting for the wooden temple to Hadimba Devi also called the Dhoongri temple. Legend has been woven around this temple as indeed it is inextricable from the life of these cheerful mountain folk, who over the centuries, have propitiated powerful mountain gods.

The artisan who built the Dhoongri temple had his right hand cut off by the reigning sovereign in order to prevent his duplicating the masterpiece. Undaunted the man trained his left hand and executed an even finer temple at Triloknath in Chamba. Whereupon the people of Triloknath, determined that such workmanship should not be repeated cut off his luckless head.

For the keen edge of excitement there is the Rohtang Pass where the river Beas rises. Falling rapidly at first, it tumbles head long at the Rahalla falls. Crystal spray against sheer rock, it falls into the alpine valley. At the top of the pass the air seems to glitter against the snow as you look down over herring-boned ridges into the Lahaul Valley.

And for relaxation try soaking at the sulphur springs in Vashisht. Hot, cleansing rock-born water. There is a pyramidal stone temple dedicated to Vashisht Muni.

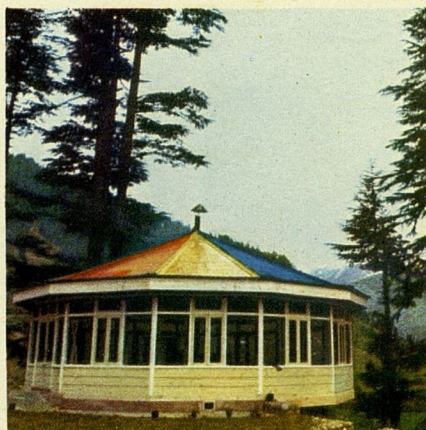
*Slate-roofed houses  
on the hillside, Kulu valley*





*Above* The mellowed stone and timber castle at Naggar  
*Right* A log cabin restaurant at Manali

field, glacier and barren mountains. So beyond the Rohtang Pass the air, wrote a traveller, is "as different as iced champagne from tepid soda water". The ascent to Keylong is first past alpine meadows strewn with primula and iris. Then rough brown plains where blue poppies blow. Keylong itself is like a barbaric jewel—"a rough emerald



## Manikaran

The other hot springs have mythological origin — at Manikaran in the Parvati valley where jagged peaks and glaciers stand sentinel over the dark blue gorge of the river. The valley closes in and the Parvati comes tumbling through the ravine in a series of beautiful falls. The people tell how the goddess Parvati once bathed here in the river with her consort Mahadeva. She laid her earrings upon the bank, and Naga, the serpent god stole them to his home beneath the earth. Mahadeva was very angry and threatened Naga. The Naga snorted with rage, blowing the jewels out of his nostrils (where he had hidden them), with such force that they flew through

the earth to Parvati again. And from the holes they made the springs have bubbled ever since.

## Malana

The wanderer might strike out from here to the solitary Malana Pass and village. The pass hangs 1,341 metres above clustering chalets. At the head of the valley descending from a circle of snowy cones is the Malana glacier. The Malana people have a distinct language and customs and are a curious pocket, aloof and closed unto themselves.

## Lahaul

Against the pastoral beauty of Kulu, the valleys of Lahaul and Spiti strike deep and sombre chords. Here lie secret worlds of snow-

in a bronze and silver setting". The dark interior of its monastery is illuminated by paintings in brilliant colours.

## Spiti

Ki monastery in Spiti perches between the silence of the river below and the crystal prisms of the Spiti mountain behind. It rises in tiers like a bastion on a remote and craggy mountain. Spiti dances have fascinating grace and rhythm.

## Dharamsala

The scene shifts as one approaches Dharamsala. The plains below wear a veil of blue. The Dhauladhar spur on which Dharamsala stands rises dark and pine covered. The snow-line is more accessible here





*The ITDC Travellers Lodge, Manali, overlooks terraced fields*

than at any other hill resort. Now the seat of the Dalai Lama, this hill station is evocative of imperial days in places like McLeod Ganj and Forsyth Ganj, or the century old church of Saint John in the Wilderness. Lord Elgin is buried here. The church has lovely stained glass windows. The lake of Kareri is set like a gem in the mountains, north of Dharamsala. Fringed by picnic spots, Dharamsala is also a good base for trekking—to the temple and waterfalls at Bhagsunath, to Triund, only 5 km from the snow line, and the temple at Chamunda Devi. Excellent fishing too, at Nadaun and Dehra Gopipur.

### Palampur

Palampur is set in the midst of pleasant tea gardens. Neugal Khud is an awe-inspiring chasm. Further south is Baijnath almost at the end of the valley. The temple dedicated to Lord Vaidyanath here, is remarkably like the one at Bajaura.

### Jwalamukhi

The Jwalamukhi temple is actually a temple without an idol. A shining blue flame that issues from a rock sanctum is worshipped as the manifestation of the goddess.

### Kangra

The valley that leads to Kangra has the luxuriant and luminous quality of a Kangra painting. Kangra achieved feudal splendour in the reign of Raja Sansar Chand Katoch in the late 18th century. Under his patronage flourished the vibrant yet delicate painting that characterises this school. The valley is steeped in romance and a village song tells of the Raja's attachment to a legendary Gaddi or shepherd maiden. Ancient temples, especially the one to the goddess Vrajeshwari, lie in the shadow of a fort that has stood many sieges.

## Dalhousie

A charming hill station named after a former viceroy, is Dalhousie. It is built on five little hills and offers the visitor a choice of quiet picnic spots. Khajjar is the loveliest, a meadow set in a thick pine forest. To complete the idyllic setting there is a small lake with floating islands and a golf course.

## Chamba

Chamba, the vale of milk and honey, is like a medieval town preserved by mountain barriers. The gathering point of a valley rich in antiquity, at its heart lies Chaugan, a grassy promenade. The gay "Chamba Rupal" are an expression of Chamba's colourful temperament. The Rang Mahal, a fortress like residence with gardens was built in the 18th century. It was famous for its murals a fine example of the balanced serenity and dynamism of Pahari painting. Some of these paintings are to be seen at the Bhuri Singh Museum. The entrance to the ancient Laxmi Narayan temple is also decorated with murals.

## Himachal Pradesh Fairs

Traditional festivals are also the occasion for fairs where devotion and exuberance go hand in hand. The most important is the colourful Minjar on the banks of the Ravi in Chamba (July - August), the Dussehra festival of Kulu (October). The statues of deities are brought to the valley for this festival, also famous for its dances, the Renuka fair held by the lakeside (November). The biggest trade fair of Lavi is held at Rampur in November. Shivaratri is celebrated with great ceremony all over the state and the fairs of Naina Devi and Nalwari in Bilaspur district are also interesting. No less interesting are the smaller fairs like those of Narkanda, Sippi, Rohru and Solan where song and dance predominate.

## Fishing

Himachal's many rivers, lakes and streams are a delight to the angler. The best trout is to be had at Katrain, Rohru and Barot. Mahaseer is available in various rivers, lakes and "khuds". The season for trout fishing is from March to October while other fishing continues throughout the year.

## Winter Sports

Kufri, 12.8 km from Simla, is a ski resort. The season is from the last week of December to the end of February. A skiing festival is held in the second week of February.

There is also an ice skating rink in Simla.

Skiing facilities are being developed at Solang near Manali.

## Trekking and Mountaineering

There are many unconquered peaks posing a challenge to the climber. The Mountaineering Institute at Manali provides the necessary facilities.

Himachal is a state of inner linked valleys, so trekking here is an exhilarating experience. There are PWD rest houses at strategic points on all routes.

## Treks

Simla to Kulu via Jalori Pass 196 km. The first 85 km. to Luri are motorable.

Simla to Kulu via Rampur (Bashleo Pass). The first 117.5 km. to Rampur are motorable.

Simla to Mussoorie via Tuini and Chakrata 243 km. The first 88.5 km. to Hakkoti are motorable.

Simla to Mussoorie via Chopal 199.5 km. The first 88.5 km. to Chopal are motorable.

Simla to Kalpa 248 km, the first 142 km. to Rampur are motorable.

*The secluded hill station of Dharamsala*





*Above* Temples at Chamba line the river bank

*Left* Chamba folk embroidery shows Lord Shiva and his family on a "Rumal" or scarf



Kinnar Kailash Parikrama—This is a kind of circular pilgrimage starting from Kalpa and ending there. Half-way, after crossing Chitkul Kanda, one road leads to the shrines of Gangotri and Badrinath via the Nilang Pass 64 km. The road however continues back to Kalpa to complete a trek of 156 km.

Sangla-Rohru-Chakrata-Mussoorie 273.5 km.

Mangia to Lahaul Spiti 32 km.

Simla to Churdhar 72.5 km.

Solan to Churdhar 71 km.

Chamba to Kilar (Pangi) 133.5 km.

Kilar-Dharwas-Sural-Kilar 51.5 km.

Kilar to Manali via Trilokinath 175.5 km.

Kilar to Kishtwar (The first bus point to Srinagar, Kashmir) 129 km.

## Note

For more detailed information on these treks and accommodation en route, contact the Himachal Pradesh Government Tourist Bureau, The Ridge, Simla, Tel : 3311

## Transport

All important towns in Himachal Pradesh are linked by bus service. For information, contact the Himachal Government Transport Booking Office, Bus Stand, Simla. Tel : 3566 & 2887. There are regional transport offices at Dhalli, Nahan, Bilaspur, Mandi, Manali, Pathankot and Chamba.

## Air Service

There is an Indian Airlines Delhi - Chandigarh - Kulu air service that operates three times a week during summer and autumn seasons.

## Travel Restrictions

Certain areas in Lahaul and Spiti and Kinnaur districts are restricted areas and visitors from abroad require permits from State Government to visit them.

## Tourist Offices

The Tourist Offices of Himachal Pradesh are located at :

Place	Tel
Simla	3311
Nahan	10
Bilaspur	24
Mandi	175
Jogindernagar	77
Kulu	7
Manali	25
Chamba	94
Dalhousie	36
Pathankot	316
Dharamsala	63
Palampur	81
Kasauli	7
Narkanda	30
New Delhi	43984

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