



NRT6 > 13 DAY TOUR

FOOTHILLS OF THE HIMALAYAS

Northern Himalayas are often referred to as *Dev Bhoomi* or the 'Land of the Gods' as the stunning mountain range of Dhauladhar raises its head to gossip with the clouds. This itinerary takes one on a spiritual journey to Amritsar for an introduction to Sikhism and then on to Dharamsala to understand Tibetan Buddhism. Along the way, visit one of Himalaya's most mysterious Hindu temples at Pragpur.

Explore the Kangra Valley with its bounty of nature and admiring the exquisite miniature Pahari paintings of the region. Visit Shimla at the end, the erstwhile summer capital of Colonial India built on seven hills. This is a very special vintage itinerary covering a span of history, beautiful landscapes and a dash of spirituality.



Insider Tips:

- October to mid-December and again mid-March to April is ideal for this itinerary.
- Whilst one would be really lucky to get an audience with the Dalai Lama or attend one of his teachings while in Dharamsala, the 17th Karmapa, the second most important Tibetan spiritual leader in exile, grants an audience and blesses people every Wednesday at the Gyuto Tantric University. One needs to reach there no later than 1300 hours.
- Holla Mohalla Festival, Anandpur Sahib: From Chandigarh, one can drive for an hour and a half to reach Anandpur Sahib – the second holiest place of worship for the Sikhs. Anandpur Sahib comes to life every year on the occasion of Holla Mohalla. This tradition dates back to the times of the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru decreed that the festival of Holi be the occasion for the display of the martial spirit of the Sikhs. Each year Holla Mohalla marks the congregation of up to 100,000 devotees from all over the country for a festival of colour and gaiety. The fair lasts for three days. The Gurudwaras here are specially decorated for the occasion and free *langars* (meals) are served to the entire visiting population.
- Citrus County Farm, Hoshiarpur: Before proceeding to Dharamsala from Amritsar, one can opt for an easy drive of two hours to reach Citrus County Farm in Hoshiarpur. It's an ideal place to enjoy an authentic farm experience, allowing one to see large scale farming of citrus fruits while relishing hearty Punjabi cooking. The owner, Harkirat Ahluwalia's ancestors were once principal landowners here. The 70 acre citrus orchard was planted by his grandfather over half a century ago. We recommend at least a one night stopover at Citrus County to experience traditional Punjabi hospitality. The farm offers three guest suites within the house and nine luxury tents in the sprawling garden adjacent to it.



DAY 06 IN DHARAMSALA

Explore the Norbulingka Institute – a beautiful tranquil space that resembles a Japanese Garden with its neat winding stone paths. Visit its many workshops dedicated to Tibetan art and craft. Later, continue to the Gyuto Tantric University whose monks specialise in a unique style of chanting where they use their throats for amplification, causing an almost hypnotic effect on the listener. End the day at the Dolma Ling Nunnery to see the Nuns debating.

DAY 07 IN DHARAMSALA

Explore the Kangra Valley – start with an audio tour of the Kangra Fort, one of India's oldest forts built 3500 years ago and the largest in the Himalayas. Later, take a ride on the Kangra Toy Train with the locals. End the day at the 12th century Baijnath Temple which is a great place to witness the spiritual traditions of the locals and pilgrims stopping by.

DAY 08 DHARAMSALA – PRAGPUR via SUJANPUR TIRA

Drive to Pragpur. En route stop at Sujanpur Tira to admire the exquisite Pahari miniature paintings of the Kangra School at Narvadeshwar Temple, overlooking the river Beas. Later in the afternoon, go on a leisurely walk of Pragpur village. Attend the evening *aarti* (prayer ceremony) in the village temple.

DAY 09 IN PRAGPUR

Visit the 6th century Mashroor Rock Temple. This quaint complex of monolithic temples is the only one of its kind in the entire sub-Himalayas of north India. Post lunch, enjoy a leisurely walk of Garli Village. Marvel at the foresight of the Sood trading community who built the entire infrastructure here in the early 20th century with their own money and design.

NIHANG SIKHS

Nihang Sikhs of Punjab are descendents of the Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind's personal guards, who continue to maintain a distinct identity with their towering turbans and regal robes. Skilled in the martial arts, they put up a spectacular display of tent pegging, fencing, gatka, equestrian skills and other traditional martial arts at the fair of Holla Mohalla in spring.



DAY 10 PRAGPUR – SHIMLA

Drive to Shimla, the erstwhile summer capital of Colonial India built on seven hills. Go on an afternoon walk around one of the seven hills – the Elysium Hill. This is a Shimla you never thought existed.

DAY 11 IN SHIMLA

Explore the Heritage Zone of Shimla listening to wonderful stories of its many colonial buildings and making your way to the Vice Regal Lodge.

DAY 12 IN SHIMLA

There is an option to go on a Nature Walk starting from the house where Rudyard Kipling wrote “Kim” and “Plain Tales from The Hills”, past a haunted hill, villages, brooks, meadows, grasslands and forests to arrive at the art gallery of a Shimla painter. Alternatively, you could take an excursion to Dhami, once a princely state, to spend the day with the hosts, walking and bird watching, as they share their personal stories.

DAY 13 SHIMLA – KANDAGHAT – CHANDIGARH – DELHI – DEPARTURE

Take the two hour Toy Train ride from Shimla to Kandaghat enjoying the picturesque scenery. Opened for traffic in 1903, this 96kms railway track is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Later, drive to Chandigarh for the evening flight to Delhi. On arrival, transfer to the international terminal for the onward flight.



Himachal Pradesh, being a hilly region in the Himalayas, experiences a pleasant climate throughout the year. However, it can get very cold in the winters.



While Hindi is largely understood, Punjabi remains a more prominent language in the region. Local languages include Pahari, Kangri and Chambyali.

Sat Sri Akal is the most commonly used greeting in Punjab and Namaste would do just fine in Himachal.

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DAY 01 ARRIVAL DELHI

Warm welcome at the airport by our representative and transfer to the hotel.

DAY 02 IN DELHI

Start the day with a choice of tour, depending upon the interest: breakfast trail or a rickshaw ride or a bicycle ride for a bit of adventure through the streets of Old Delhi. Visit the 16th century Humayun's Tomb, the first garden tomb of Asia and the Qutab Minar, the magnificent 12th century minaret later in the day. Both are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Spend the evening exploring the 13th century Hauz Khas Village with its quirky shops, art galleries and restaurants.

DAY 03 DELHI – AMRITSAR

Fly to Amritsar. Later in the afternoon head to the Golden Temple. Spend time in the community kitchen manned entirely by volunteers who feed up to 100,000 people every day for free. Post dinner, return to the Golden Temple and join the pilgrims to

witness the “Going to Bed Ceremony” where the holy book of the Sikhs, considered a living master, is taken to its resting place for the night.

DAY 04 IN AMRITSAR

Visit the Jallianwala Bagh and the Durgiana Temple dedicated to a Hindu goddess but modelled after the Golden Temple. Enjoy lunch at a local *dhaba*, relishing the traditional Amritsari cuisine. Later, head out to the Wagah Border via Sarai Amanat Khan, a *serai* (resting place) set up by the legendary calligrapher of the Taj Mahal, Amanat Khan. It is the only place, apart from the Taj Mahal, where you can see Amanat Khan's calligraphy work.

DAY 05 AMRITSAR – DHARAMSALA

Drive to Dharamsala. In the afternoon visit the Dalai Lama's Monastery and participate in a Kora. A Kora is a Tibetan Buddhist ritual of walking around a sacred site in a clockwise direction. Later go on a leisurely walk of the Mcleodganj market with its many eclectic shops.