

# Ancient Cultures of the Indian Himalayas

*Spiti Valley, Kinnaur, Manali, Dharamsala, Amritsar*

**June 16-July 4, 2011**

**Go where few people have gone before.  
Experience ancient culture and enjoy exquisite,  
dramatic beauty.**

In this region of hill stations, fertile valleys, lunar landscapes and rarefied mountain air, local inhabitants have carved out a spartan existence in the pockets of habitable terrain.

Kinnaur and Spiti Valley, two districts set within remote areas of the Indian Himalaya and bordering Tibet, are the highlights of this very special tour. This area has been off limits to travelers until recently.

So dramatic is the land that on one side there are dense forests, fruit orchards and lush green valleys, while on the other, rugged and barren mountains and miles and miles of high-altitude desert.

**Spirit of India's 19 day journey** offers visits to traditional villages, ancient monasteries containing priceless collections of thankas, sculptures and wall paintings, private meetings with lamas and a chance for genuine interaction with local people.

Limited to 12 people, the group travels in 2200 cc Peugeot engine Armada jeeps; 5 star hotel in Delhi, mountain resorts, simple guesthouses; one night deluxe tents with attached bath.

**includes:**

accommodations ♦ airport transfers ♦ land transport ♦  
Escorted throughout ♦ daily breakfast ♦ all meals in the  
himalayas ♦ all interstate taxes ♦ all special permits

**Call for reservation application**

**415/381-5861 888-367-6147**

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**[www.spirit-of-india.com](http://www.spirit-of-india.com)**



# Ancient Cultures Indian Himalayas

## Exploring the Greater Himalayas of Kinnaur, Spiti and Lahaul

Join us for an intimate experience with the people, the culture and the land.

**June 16 Arrival in Delhi.** Transfer to hotel Svelte.

**June 17 Delhi** (B, D)

Morning: rest and recuperate from long flight. Those with energy can take a stroll around the area near the hotel which boasts cafes, bookstores, and local bazaars. Afternoon: sightseeing of Old & New Delhi including a rickshaw ride through the old Chandi Chowk bazaar. Orientation and dinner with Sanjay at Colors and Spice Restaurant.

**June 18 Chandigarh- Shimla** Oberoi Clarks (B,D)

Transfer to the train station for the Shatabdi Express to Chandigarh (dep 07:40/arr 11:10). Drive to Simla. Lunch will be enroute. Rest of afternoon/evening free on the mall.

**June 19 Simla-Sarahan** (174 km/7 hrs) Hotel Srikhand (B, D)

Early morning breakfast, drive to the base of Jhaku (Hanuman) Temple. It is a short 15 minute climb uphill on well laid-out steps to the temple.

We then drive to Sarahan, a beautiful village surrounded by apple orchards and dominated by Shrikhand Mahadev Peak (5155 M/ 16,912 feet) which resembles the "Shivling." We visit the Bhimakali Temple, a wonderful mixture of Buddhist and Hindu architecture. It is very sacred to both communities. The Bhimakali goddess idol is approximately 200 years old.

**June 20 Saranhan-Sangla** Panchali Resort (B,L,D)

Sangla Valley, also known as Baspa Valley, is by far the most beautiful valley of Himachal Pradesh, full of wooded slopes and surrounded by green fields and high mountain peaks as far away as Chitkul, the last inhabited village in this valley. After settling into our deluxe camp, walk across a small foot bridge to the enchanting village of Bisteri.

**June 21 Sangla-Kalpa** (40 km/2 hrs) Kalpa Villa Resort (B,L,D)

Drive to Kalpa. Enroute visit Rakcham and Kamru villages in the Sangla Valley. Looming above Kalpa village is the impressive Mt. Kinner Kailash (6050 M/ 19,850 feet). Arrive in time for lunch. Afternoon: walk the Old Hindustan Road to Roghi Village. Overnight at the beautiful Kalpa Villa, situated at the base of Mt. Kinner Kailash.

**June 22 Kalpa Kalpa Villa.** (B,L,D)

Full day for walking the ancient and exquisite villages of Chitkul, Chini, Peo, Kothi, Pangi and Telangi.

**June 23 Kalpa-Nako** Kinner Camp (B,L,D)

**Visit to Nako subject to road connectivity, otherwise we drive from Kalpa direct to Tabo.**

The village of Nako lies at an altitude of 3625 meters (11,893 feet), high above the last stretch of the Spiti Valley. It was once a very important center of Buddhism in the region. There are at least seven temples belonging to different periods between the 11th and 12th centuries distributed all over the village, including a monastic complex on its western edge. Boasting four temples and a number of additional buildings, this complex preserves the earliest artistic heritage. The austere and unornamented exteriors of the buildings give little hint of the important artistic and religious legacy that lies within the walls.

**June 24 Nako-Tabo** (69 km/2-3 hrs) Tabo Retreat (B,L,D)

Today we enter the Spiti Valley. Geographically and archeologically, Spiti is a living museum. The mountains are devoid of any vegetation due to erosion by wind, sun and snow over thousands of years.

Our vehicles climb up to the village of Tabo (3050 M/ 10,006 feet). Built in the year 996 AD, the Chos Khor Monastery at Tabo is the largest monastery in Spiti and one of the few remaining examples of the Golden Period of Buddhist Culture in the Himalayan Region. The wall frescos of the monastery are comparable in their antiquity and quality to those of the Ajanta caves, hence they are called the Ajanta of the Himalayas. It houses more than 100 Lamas, a large number of scriptures and pieces of art, wall paintings, tankhas and stucco. This monastery follows the Dalai Lama's sect of Buddhism. We will reach Tabo for lunch. In the afternoon and evening we will visit the Monastery and village.

**June 25 Tabo-Lhalung-Dankar-Tabo** (74 km) Tabo Retreat/Spiti (B,L,D)

Rise early if you want to join the monks in morning puja at Tabo monastery (5 min walk through the village).

We drive to Lhalung which is 14 km (9 miles) from the main road in Lingthi Valley. It is a magnificent village of 45 houses. In this village stands the second most interesting monastery of Spiti. The compound consists of five buildings. At some spots fragmentary remains of a wall encircling all the buildings can be found. The monastic site of Lhalung once consisted of nine temples. Together with the unusually rich interior of Lhalung's main chapel and the fact that the building of the temples is also attributed to Rinchen Zangpo, it may suggest that the temple site of Lhalung, like Tabo, was designed as a Chokhor site, a place for learning and debate as opposed to a simple chapel for worship by the local people.

We drive onward to Dhankar, the ancient capital of Spiti. Dankar Gompa (3800 M/ 12,467 feet) was built in the 12th century. This hilltop fort

dominates the scene, and once served as a jail. It contains more than 160 scriptures of Lamas and Buddhists in the Bhoti language. A statue of Dhyana Buddha consisting of four complete figures seated back to back is the main attraction of this four to five century-old monastery. Unfortunately, the ancient Gumpa, situated on the very edge of the peak, is deteriorating. Entering the interior may be restricted in the very near future. They have shifted the main monastery to a new complex at the entrance of the village. His Holiness the Dalai Lama inaugurated this temple in June 2004. Return to Tabo for overnight.

#### June 26 Tabo-Mane-Pin-Kaza Parasol Retreat (B,L,D)

Full day visit to the village and monastery of Mane, then a drive to the Pin Valley National Park. Afternoon: free to explore the valley for wildlife, picnic lunch. Mane is just 4 km west of the Pin River and situated at a height of 3700 M (12,140 feet). There is a small village full of green fields and a beautiful gumpa built in the 14th century by the Geluk-pa-sect. Ancient paintings and statues of Avalokitesvara and Sakyamuni are very impressive. The view from the village is breathtaking, with the valleys of Tabo and Kaza on either side. Overnight stay in Kaza.

#### June 27 Kaza-Ki-Kibber-Gete Kaza Kaza Retreat (B,L,D)

Visit the ancient Ki and Kibber Gompas and the village of Gete, which are among the highest inhabited villages in the world.

#### June 28 Kunzum Pass-Rohtang Pass - Manali Banon Resort. (B,L,D)

Morning drive over the famous Kunzum Pass, enroute visit Lahaul Valley, between Kunzum and Rohtang. The drive offers magnificent views. Continue to Manali over Rohtang La (3980 M/ 13,058 feet). At Rohtang Pass we relax and enjoy the breath-taking beauty; optional guided horse ride up the mountain.

#### June 29 Manali Banon Resort (B)

Explore the picturesque Valley of Gods at Manali and Nagar. An easy day of strolling around Manali. Visit Dhungri Temple (also known as Hadimba Temple by locals) and the quaint village of Nagar with its many ancient temples, including the 11th-12th century Temple Gauri and the Tripura Sundri Devi Temple.

#### June 30 Manali-Kullu-Bir-Bajjnath-Palampur 180 km (110 miles). Taragarh Palace Hotel (B,D)

Drive through Kullu to Kangra - the Valley of Temples. We visit the most ancient / oldest existing Shiva temples at Bajjnath.

#### July 1 Taragarh Taragarh Palace (B,D)

We start with a visit to Bir, a predominantly Buddhist town with some nice new monasteries. Just below the village, a road to the west leads to a tiny Tibetan settlement with a fine gumpa which belongs to the Nyingmapa order of Tibetan Buddhism. It is a beautiful and peaceful location. The monks, who are not accustomed to visitors, are very friendly. Many peaks between 3500M - 5000M (11,483 - 16,404 feet) of the Dhauladhar are clearly visible from here.

Bajjnath (5 Km) is a pleasant little town surrounded by tea plantations and the Daula Dhar range. This village houses the oldest existing Shiva temple. Just below the village is the Tashijong Gumpa, which is the focus of a small Tibetan community who hail from Kham province in Tibet. This fine gumpa also belongs to the Nyingmapa order of Tibetan Buddhism. We will visit the Sherabilling monastery and hear the award-winning chants of the monks (2003 GRAMMY Award Winner for Best Traditional World Music Album). Sherab Ling Monastery is nestled in the gentle pine-forested foothills of northern India's Kangra Valley, the seat of its founder His Eminence Ti Situpa XII, a leading Tibetan Buddhist teacher and peace campaigner. Here the monks perform prayer ceremonies as part of their daily lives, originating many centuries ago in the great Buddhist monasteries of Tibet. The monks begin their day with the Lineage Prayer, offering respect to a line of great meditation practitioners going back as far as the 7th century. The Mahakala Ceremony is part of each day's closing ritual in which the monks ask for purification and dedicate their blessings to all sentient creatures. We will attend the evening chants beginning at approximately 3 pm.

#### July 2 Taragarh- Norbulingka-Dharamsala (McLeod Ganj) 40 km; Hotel Surya Resort (B,D)

Enroute we visit the institute of Tibetan Arts and Handicrafts in Norbulingka. Upon arrival, we visit the center of Tibetan Medicines and Astrology, time permitting. Afternoon: attend puja at the Karma Pa monastery (pending). Evening: you are free to explore the Tibetan Markets.

#### July 3 Dharamsala-Amritsar (175 km/5 hrs) Comfort Inn (B)

Early morning (6 am) walk to the Dalai Lama's monastery to attend the monks' puja; afterwards circumambulate the monastery complex along with the locals. Return to hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast, drive to Amritsar, in the state of Punjab, in the Himalayan foothills called the Shivaliks. Amritsar, home of the Golden Temple, is one of the most ancient and fascinating cities in India. It is an important seat of Sikh history and culture. Being the gateway for travelers coming to India on the overland route from Central Asia, it soon became the center of various commercial activities. The Golden Temple was founded by the fourth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Ramdas, and completed by his successor Guru Arjan Dev. It is famous for its full golden dome, one of the most sacred pilgrim sites for Sikhs. The Mandir is built on a 67-foot square of marble and is a two-storied structure. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had the upper half of the building adorned with approximately 400 kg of gold leaf. The Golden Temple is surrounded by a number of other temples, such as the Durgiana Temple.

After lunch we visit the Golden Temple of the Sikhs. We will circumambulate the temple, stopping periodically for moments of quiet reflection. The temple complex is like a small community, filled with many different activities. We will visit the kitchen where free meals are prepared by volunteers throughout the day; the temple where the holy book, Aad Guru Granth Sahib, is read aloud from 4 am to 10 pm daily; and observe devotional rituals.

Travel to the border town Wagah to see flag ceremony at dusk. We return to the temple in the evening for the closing ceremony.

#### July 4 Amritsar-Delhi-Home (B,D)

Morning independent. Transfer to airport for flight 9w 3322, departing 14:15, arriving 15:40 in Delhi. Transfer to hotel Ashoka Country Resort-shared rooms for wash, change. Dinner and late night transfer to airport for flight home.

**Price:** \$3880 per person, based on min 6 people; **Plus Airfare:** Amritsar-Delhi approx range \$110-195

**Single supplement** \$925

#### Includes:

Accommodation with meals as indicated  
Two nights Hotel Svelte, Delhi (B/ one dinner)  
One night Oberoi Clarkes / Woodville Palace, Shimla (B,D)  
One night Hotel Srikhand, Sarahan (B,D)  
One night Panchali Resort, Chitkul (B,L,D)  
Two nights Kinner Villa Kalpa (B,L,D)  
One night Kinner Camp, Nako-Deluxe camp with comfortable beds, attached toilets and baths and electricity in the tent. Excellent location (B,L,D)  
One night Tabo Retreat, Tabo (B,L,D)  
Three nights Parasol Retreat, Kaza (B,L,D)  
Two nights Hotel Banon Resort, Manali (B,D)  
Two nights Taragarh Palace, Taragarh (B,D)  
One night Hotel Surya Resorts, Dharamsala (B,D)  
One night Hotel Comfort Inn, Amritsar (B,D)  
Farewell dinner and shared rooms for wash and change at the Ashok Country Resort. near airport

Transport as per itinerary in Toyota Qualis/Innova (3 people per Jeep).

All arrival and departure transfers

Delhi sightseeing with professional local guide

Escort throughout the journey, with min 4 people

Train ticket AC Chair Car Delhi to Chandigarh

Entrance fees to Monuments, Temples and Monasteries

Mineral water during long drives

Special inner-line permits

India Gov Service Tax

**Does Not Include:** international air, visa fee, insurance, tips, personal expenses such as laundry, phone calls, drinks

**International Air:** Check out the link "Discount Airfares" on our website. Truly the best prices I have ever encountered. We are happy to assist you if you like.

**Insurance:** We highly recommend trip cancellation/travel insurance. A brochure and application will be included in your trip confirmation packet.

Please Note: changes in the itinerary may occur while on the journey due to road conditions.

#### Our Escort: [Mr. Sanjay Verman](#)

We are privileged and honored to have our partner Mr. Sanjay Verman lead our Himachal Pradesh journeys. Mr. Verman started his own travel agency from the courtyard of his house in Delhi in 1993, and by 1996 he was one of the three biggest Indian travel agents in just those three years. But he wanted to do something different. As he says, "Sometimes people make money without necessarily enjoying what they do and I don't want to be one of them." Leaving his business to his younger brother, he left for the hills, not the usual Shimla, Mussouri, Naital variety, but the far-off Kinnaur Region, 12 hours north of Shimla. For two years he rigorously researched the remote areas of Kalpa and Chitkul. He then formed a company to develop base camps in this uncharted region. Mr. Verman's dream of doing something different has opened the gates to people of the world to experience the breathtaking beauty and ancient culture of a land never before open to tourists. You will find Sanjay to be not only the foremost expert for this region, but also a most extraordinary being to have the privilege to know. Spirit of India was the first American company to bring visitors into this previously restricted area.