



Monk for a Month Express Spiti Valley

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ADVENTURES OF THE SPIRIT

with Ecosphere

14 Days Tibetan Buddhism Experience

The Himalayas do not need much introduction, yet in this vast ocean of endless space there lie remote hidden havens that catch our imagination and enthrall us with their splendors. Spiti is one such haven that lay isolated and closed to the outside world till as late as 1992, when it was first opened up for travelers. Lying in the Trans-Himalayan belt in the state of Himachal Pradesh in India, this region borders Tibet in the East and Ladakh in the north and bears stark ecological and cultural similarities to its neighbours.

A mosaic of unadulterated moonscapes and invigorating spirits, the land that time forgot, the symphony that resonates across centuries, a muse of the mystics, an emotion and not a destination, 'the Spiti valley – a unique haven of environmental, spiritual and architectural integrity'.

It is here that we have developed this unique yet engaging program to enable one to go deep into a space where entry is possible only for the initiated.

This program is a journey that takes you into both the external as well as internal spaces that surround our physical, mental and spiritual grounds and gives you the opportunity to withdraw temporarily from all preconceived notions of religious, spiritual and mundane notions.

As the sage says "Your cup is full. How can I put anything in it till you empty it out first?"

The initial days are spent understanding the basic concepts and practices of Vajrayana Buddhism (also known as Tibetan Buddhism) – The "Vehicle of the Thunderbolt". We will also travel to some important religious and spiritual hubs in Spiti before heading to our final halt at Dharamshala – the seat of the HH Dalai Lama.

The program will showcase the essence of Spiritual life in these high altitude spiritual havens. A journey that is sure to change ones perspective and paradigms of mundaneness and its persisting monotony.



What's Included:

- Accommodation – Day 1 to Day 13
- Transfers – Day 1 to Day 14 (Pick up from Shimla Airport and Drop to Dharamshala Airport)
- Meals
- Guide – Day 1 to Day 14
- Sessions on Day 4, 5, 6, 7, 10
- Monastery Fees in Spiti and Inner line permit

What's Not Included:

- Flights till Shimla and from Dharamshala to Delhi
- Mineral water and beverages (other than those provided)
- Tips
- Insurance
- Expenses arising out of unforeseen circumstances
- Activities that entail an additional charge



Day One

Arrival Delhi – Connecting Flight to Shimla

O/N SHIMLA

Mode: Flight

Accommodation: Hotel

Today we arrive in India in the city of New Delhi and catch a connecting flight onto Shimla. Once in Shimla you will be picked up from the airport and transferred to your Hotel. Shimla was the summer capital during the time of the British Raj and still has some remnants of the same.



Day Two

Shimla to Kalpa

O/N KALPA

Mode: Taxi

Duration: 6-7 Hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Gradient: Gradual to steep Ascent & Descent

Being in the mountains has its spiritual sides and once the woods of the middle Himalayas have stirred that spirit, only the most intense experiences can satiate the quest. As we drive out of Shimla and move towards the Greater Himalayas (Kinnaur region) the views of the Kullu and Spiti ranges keep us abreast with what lies ahead. The fir, birch, Cedar and Oak forests intermixed with apple orchards along the national Highway 22 are a perfect companion and more than often they seem to tempt us to get lost in their myriad spaces.

From the cedar, fir and birch forests of Kufri and Narkanda the road takes a steep descend down into the valley of the Sutlej river.

The initial part of the route is where the valley gorges into a deep abyss and frowning rock jaws descend sleepily from great heights and the roar of the Sutlej surely rises ominously from those shadowy depths. Taranda cliffs are one such sight.

We follow the Sutlej river for a while till Poari, where we begin our ascent to Kalpa. This region of Kinnaur offers some of the most dramatic scenery in the Himalaya. Here the Kinner Kailash range appears to spread itself out for the admiring gaze of the visitor. Not so close as to induce claustrophobia, yet almost to hand, the Mountains rise majestically from the river bed up through orchard forest and glinting glaciers to rocky pinnacles and snow-capped tops



Day Three

Kalpa to Kaza

O/N KAZA

Mode: Jeep

Gradient: Gradual Ascent

Duration: 6-7 Hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Our journey today, is to a region which was opened to tourists only a couple of decades ago, from Lower Kinnaur to Upper Kinnaur and eventually to Spiti, it's a transition in the landscape, beliefs and life styles, a 200 km journey through the history and culture of this amazing region. Before starting today, we will have to get Inner Line Permits made as the route today crosses into the inner line of the international border.

The journey moves into high altitude territory as we enter Khab, the confluence of the Sutlej and Spiti rivers. Tibet is a stone throw from this point and the Shipki ranges rise majestically on the eastern sides. From here on it is the Spiti river that will be our companion through some rugged backcountry. We will drive through the Hangrang valley of Upper Kinnaur and will pass through the well known village of Nako, famous for its lake. We take a short halt and explore the lake before continuing our journey to Kaza, Spiti



Day Four

Kaza

O/N KAZA

Accommodation: Hotel

Today is a day to get acclimatized. We will take it easy and spend the day We spend the day with members of the Ecosphere team and get oriented on Spiti, Ecosphere and the program. Orientation forms another important part of this journey as much as acclimatization forms the essence of being in harmony with the rarefied air in this high altitude territory. Today we will also get a brief introduction on Buddhism.



Day Five & Six

Kaza – Kwang Nunnery – Kaza

O/N KAZA

Mode: Jeep

Accommodation: Hotel

We will spend the next 2 days taking a deep dive into Buddhist philosophy and practises as well as gaining a deeper insight into the inner workings of our mind.

We will have –

- Sessions with teachers on Buddhist concepts and practices
- Opportunities to understand Buddhist philosophy and meditation techniques
- An inner immersion while we experience life at a Buddhist nunnery.



Day Seven

Kaza – Kwang Nunnery - Phukchong

O/N PHUKCHONG

Mode: Jeep

Duration: 1 to 2 hrs mins

Accommodation: Lodge

Experience the unique Cham festival where Monks adorn Masks and do an elaborate tantric buddhist dance to ward off evil and purify the environment.

Head onto Pin valley for the night - where we will be undertaking a day of fasting & silence



Day Eight

Kaza to Phukchong

O/N PHUKCHONG

Accommodation: Lodge

Today we will undertake a short silent retreat to take us deeper within and to experience how it feels to silence our body and mind for a day.

It is common practice for monks and nuns to undertake serious retreats extending up to 10 years!



Day Nine

Phukchong – Tabo – Dhankhar - Kaza

O/N KAZA

Mode: Jeep & Trek

Gradient: Gradual to steep ascents

Duration: 3 to 4 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

After a day of solitude and silence we head onto some of Spiti's famous centers of spirituality. We head first to Tabo, a quaint little village famous for its Monastery, which celebrated 1000 years in 1996. This is one of the largest monastic complexes of Spiti and is referred to as 'the Ajanta of the Himalayas', because of its rich repertoire of wall paintings, frescoes and Thangkas.

Tabo has been declared as a protected monument by the Archaeological Survey of India and is a classic example of a well-preserved Tibetan monastery. We shall visit the monastery here and even some of the meditation caves to get an insight into life of the monks here.

From Tabo we head to Dhankhar village, the ancient capital of Spiti. Dhankhar is known for its ancient monastery and Fort. The Monastery is perched precariously between unique wind eroded structures and offers some stunning views. Remnants of the Dhankhar Fort, which housed the royal family of Spiti, still remain and one can walk upto the top and see the relevance of its strategic location.

Dhankhar is also known for its lake which is surrounded with legends. The lake is a short hike (approx. 1 hour) from the village. If time permits we can hike up to the lake. The pass at the top of the lake offers stunning views of the Dhankhar village and the confluence of the Spiti and Pin rivers at the base.

From Dhankhar we head back to Kaza, where we spend the night.



Day Ten

Kaza – Kwang – Key - Kaza

O/N KAZA

Mode: Jeep

Gradient: Gradual ascents

Duration: 1 to 2 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Today we head back to Kwang and will have a closing session with our teacher with an opportunity for questions, clarifications and discussions.

We end the day with a visit to the famous Key Monastery, one of Spiti's major centers for Buddhist learning and practice. Key Monastery is one of Spiti's most spectacular monastery perched up on a small conical hill.



Day Eleven

Kaza to Manali

O/N MANALI

Mode: Jeep

Gradient: Gradual to steep ascents and descents

Duration: 7-8 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Today is an early start. We drive over the Kunzum la (pass/4551mts), which divides Lahaul and Spiti. We spend some time taking in the fabulous views of the Chandrabhaga range of mountains, visit the Buddhist shrine at Kunzum and get into our waiting jeeps.

We drive along the valley of the Chandra river until we reach the famous Atal Tunnel (separating Kullu from the Lahaul valley), and descend into the Kullu valley. Though the journey is long today, one hardly notices it as the changing landscapes enroute keep one mesmerized.

Today we make our way back into the hustle and bustle of urban spaces. Evening is free for us to explore Manali town.



Day Twelve

Manali to Dharamshala

O/N DHARAMSHALA

Mode: Jeep

Gradient: Mostly Gradual with minor ascents and descents

Duration: 6-7 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Our halt in Manali is a short one and after a relaxed breakfast we make our way to Dharamshala, and further onto McLeodganj, the seat of the exiled Tibetan Government.



Day Thirteen

Dharamshala

O/N DHARAMSHALA

Mode: Jeep

Accommodation: Hotel

Today we shall explore Mcleodganj and its many faces. A visit to Mcleodganj is incomplete without visiting the The Dalai Lama's monastery, temple and his residence. There are some other interesting places one can explore around Mcleodganj such as the Tibetan Men-tse-khang medical centre, the quaint little village of Dharamkot, Bhagsunath and Galleu. Depending on time available we shall visit some of the places.

Evening is again free for us to explore the market.



Day Fourteen

The program ends today and one is free to depart Dharamshala today or to stay on.

There are daily flights to Delhi and frequent buses to different destinations in the north of India such as Rishikesh, Delhi, Amritsar.

Until Next Time!



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