Gentle Walking, Indian Hill Stations & the Golden Temple, India

Gentle day walks exploring Indian culture and the history of the British Raj.

Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouses
Grade	Gentle
Duration	16 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 7 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader India
Land only	Joining in Delhi, India
Max altitude	2,827m/9,275ft, Triund, Day 7.

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available

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Last updated: 06 October 2026

Group Departure Dates and Prices

Group departures

2026 Dates:

Sat 14 Mar – Sun 29 Mar
Sat 10 Oct – Sun 25 Oct

Group prices
Visit the holiday page of our website for up-to-date land only and flight inclusive prices for all group departure dates https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/holiday/gentle-walking-indian-hill-stations-the-golden-temple. Single supplement options can also be found here.

No Surcharge Guarantee
The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly – we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled expertsThey will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide

Your leader will be a knowledgeable, friendly, English-speaking Indian guide. We use one of the largest and oldest tour operators in India who have excellent, highly-trained staff.

Your trip highlights

- A well-paced and highly varied itinerary that includes a visit to the home town of the Dalai Lama, a ride on a mountain train, time to walk the Mall in Shimla and drives through rural India and Himalayan foothills.
- Time in Amritsar to visit the magnificent Golden Temple and take a walking tour of the old city.
- Accommodation in converted palaces, heritage properties and characterful hotels of a high standard.
- An English speaking Indian guide with excellent knowledge and first-hand experience of the regions you will travel through.
- Good walks on seven days, often off-the-beaten-track, plus on foot exploration of cultural sights.

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Delhi. Fly to Amritsar. Visit the Golden Temple.
Day 3	Return to the Golden Temple. Afternoon heritage walk.
Days 4-6	Drive to Pragpur. Gentle walking in the area. Drive to Dharamsala.
Days 7-8	Walk from Mcleod Ganj to Triund. Sightseeing tour of Dharamsala. Drive to Palampur.
Days 9-10	Walk to Buddhist Monastery and walk to Billing. Drive to Manali.
Days 11-13	Day walk to Old Manali. Drive to Shimla. At leisure in Shimla.
Day 14	Walk to Kotidar from Mashobra. Visit Wild Flower Hall.
Day 15	Toy Train ride to Kandaghat. Drive to Chandigarh. Train to Delhi.
Day 16	Fly to London.

Trip summary

For those seeking gentle walks through stunning scenery in the foothills of the Himalaya, returning to historically interesting, characterful and comfortable accommodation in the evening, this is the trip for you. The itinerary is incredibly varied and stimulating. To start your trip in style, you begin at the fabulous Golden Temple at Amritsar - the dazzling spiritual centre of the Sikh faith, that rises in all its gilded glory from the middle of a rectangular lake. You are then taken through several little known ‘gems’ of Himachal Pradesh, such as its first heritage village of Pragpur, and the paragliders' paradise of Palampur. No visit to Northern India would be complete without a visit to the more renowned towns of Dharamsala, the home of the Dalai Lama, Manali, the Mecca for mountain holidays, and Shimla, the summer capital of the British Raj.

To give you a multi-dimensional and memorable trip, we incorporate much more than simply walking. To give you a full flavour of Himachal, we have included a ride on one of the famous narrow gauge mountain trains, with visits to Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries, hot springs, and handicraft centres.

Not forgetting that this is also a holiday, you will have ample opportunity to relax at the palatial heritage properties you will be staying in, to explore their grounds and history, and indulge in their extensive amenities. Some of these properties are converted castles and palaces, and all have been chosen for their rich character, charm and history. Where we have been unable to find heritage properties, we have selected the best quality hotels in the area.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly London to Delhi.

Fly overnight from London to Delhi.

Overnight: Holiday Inn New Delhi Airport or Lemon Tree Premier

Day 2: Arrive Delhi in the early hours and transfer to hotel. Afternoon flight to Amritsar. Visit the Golden Temple.

Your flight will arrive in the early hours and you will be met at the airport and immediately transferred to your hotel close by. After a little time to rest and recuperate, you will be taken to the airport for your domestic flight to Amritsar.

On arrival at Amritsar you will be transferred to Mrs Bhandari's Guest House. This is in a peaceful location on the edge of town in what was the old British cantonment. Entering the brick paved courtyard you might well be greeted by the family's small herd of water buffalo! Time now to rest and adjust to India. There are acres of lawned gardens, a disused tennis court and a nice swimming pool. You will soon get used to the heat, but the guest house has a very trusting system for cold drinks - you help yourself from the fridge and sign a chit nearby. The atmosphere is relaxed, family friendly and delightfully Indian. In the afternoon you will be taken to see the Golden Temple.

Golden Temple
Sri Harmandir Sahib, also more commonly called 'The Golden Temple', is the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion. The Golden Dome alone is said to be gilded with 100kgs of pure gold and is supposed to represent an inverted lotus flower pointing back to the earth to symbolise the Sikh's concern with the problems of this world. The temple sits on a rectangular platform surrounded by a pool of water called the 'Armir Sarovar' in which pilgrims bathe. Enclosing the pool and temple are ornate marble buildings with four entrances. The first book of Sikh scriptures is kept during the day in the Golden Temple and is removed at around 10pm each evening to the Sikh parliament building. It is brought back to the temple every day at 4am. These processions are worth seeing.

Overnight: Mrs Bandhari's Guest House, Amritsar

Day 3: Return to the Golden Temple. Afternoon heritage walk around Amritsar – around 2 hours.

Amritsar itself is not a very old city, only about 450 years old and has suffered invasions and war through much of its history. Even the Afghans have sacked it twice. It is a bustling metropolis and its back streets are worth exploring for the very many handicrafts on offer.

This morning you will return to the Golden Temple with your guide who will take you into the kitchens to see how they prepare the food to feed up to 10,000 people per day. It is an amazing feat of catering. Afterwards you have some time at leisure.

In the afternoon you will enjoy a walk around old Amritsar that reveals much of its fascinating history. Some of the sights you will see include an ancient sacred tree, the town hall, a lively chowk and several temples and gurdwaras.

Overnight: Mrs Bandhari's Guest House, Amritsar (Meals: B)

Day 4: Drive to Pragpur, 170km - 5-6 hours.

In the morning you will drive for 5-6 hours to Pragpur. Leaving Amritsar the main road travels east (do not be surprised to see people driving in the wrong direction on dual carriageways) and soon you head north east through rural India. Here it is very green and cultivated. You pass through a number of small towns before the road suddenly climbs into a range of hills. Covered in jungle and populated by monkeys you will thread your way along through the hills on switchbacks. You pass more small towns and temples and drop into river valleys still choked with jungle.

Finally, you find the Judges Court near the village of Pragpur; a real touch of 'old colonial' India. Reflecting the ambience of Anglo-Indian traditions this country manor was built by Justice Jai Lal at the turn of the 20th Century. Spread over 10 acres of orchards the hotel offers a magnificent view of the snow peaks. Located near the ornamental village tank and approached by a cobbled street this courtyard haven captures a bygone era. Pragpur is also the first notified heritage village in India.

Overnight: Judge's Court, Pragpur (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Gentle walk to the banks of the river Beas - 2-3 hours. Afternoon free to visit Pragpur Market.

In the morning, you take a gentle 2-3 hour stroll to the banks of the River Beas, passing many attractive traditional village houses en route. Here you can watch the timeless scene of villagers harvesting wheat and women transporting water in copper pots on their heads. You can enjoy the genuinely unspoilt landscapes of the Himachal countryside, where you are extremely unlikely to see another tourist and may well be invited into a villager's home for chai and a chat.

Lunch is at Judge's Court and the food here is superb; much of the ingredients come from the Court itself, such as its excellent spinach and delicious new potatoes. The orchard boasts mango, lychee, grape, plum, persimmon, citrus and exotic trees like camphor, clove and cardamom. The milk and dairy products used in their kitchen come from Judge's Court dairy in the grounds. Water is exclusively piped from an ancestral mountain spring.

Mr Lal is an exceptional host and if present at the time of your stay, will sit for meals with you and entertain you with stories and fascinating facts about the history of Judge's Court and of Pragpur. He was largely instrumental in obtaining Pragpur's status as the first heritage village in India.

The Judge's Court has a wealth of information on local walks and other activities in the area; Mr Lal will be only too pleased to offer his advice on these to help you gain the most from your stay. Staying at Judge's Court offers a unique ambience and a special kind of hospitality. All of its nine rooms are different and equally elegant and have names such as Kipling, Dhauladhar, and Kangra.

In the afternoon, you can visit the Pragpur market. There are several silversmiths who offer handmade trinkets and cloth shops with a variety of materials. Local tailors will quickly stitch up dresses. Weaving is a cottage industry. You could order hand woven blankets and shawls of your choice. Wool can be purchased from the market. Hand block printing on cloth is also undertaken and you might want to select material that can be printed to your requirements. There are several other handicraft products available.

Overnight: Judge's Court, Pragpur (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Gentle local walk. Drive to Dharamsala,1,457m/4,760ft - 60 km, 3 hours.

Garli is a 'sister village' of Pragpur. It is a pleasant walk of around 2km through pretty countryside. Garli was said to have been established earlier than Pragpur and along with Pragpur and Rakkar it was a stronghold of the Sood Community. The Soods of Garli built some attractive houses whose architectural features resemble those of Shimla. Some of the interesting buildings deserving a visit are the United Commercial Bank of India (UCO Bank) office building, the home of Lala Mohan Lal, and the Garli Boys' School. The water system at Garli was laid by Lala Mohan Lal, a prominent advocate of his time, who arranged for pipes to be laid from Seri to Garli. A few years ago this water system was taken over by the Himachal Pradesh Government and is now managed by the Public Health Department. From Garli the road

leads to the Beas River. It terminates after 3kms at Chamba-ka-Pattan overlooking the river.
The drive to Dharamsala is about 3 hours, which includes a stop at Jwalamukhi Temple, one of the most revered Hindu temples in North India. The deity is a blue flame fed by natural gas which shoots out of the rock in the sanctum. It is worshipped as the goddess of fire, Jwalamukhi. As you continue on your journey to the home of the Dalai Lama, you have superb views of the Dhauladur Range. For part of the way, you will be following the narrow gauge mountain railway line. You pass Kangra Fort en route, perched atop a cliff above the Banganga and Majhi rivers.

Dharamsala is a very pleasant town in a scenic location of hills, tea gardens, forests of deodar cedar trees and views of the Dhauladar Mountains, 5,000m/16,000ft, to the north. It was a popular hill station for the British working in or near Delhi, offering a cool respite during the hot summer months and they had planned to make the town the summer capital of India, but after a terrible earthquake in the valley here in 1905, moved instead to Shimla.

Overnight: Grace Cottage or Nomadic Inn, Dharamsala (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Walk towards Triund and return.

This morning you will drive from your hotel to Mcleod Ganj, 5km north of Dharmsala, also known as Upper Dharamsala. At 5,741ft/1,750m above sea level, Mcleod Ganj is a place pulsating with life. It has a delightful mixture of eastern and western cultures, reflected in the people and in the shrines of worship. Hippy-style westerners jostle for space in the bazaar alongside Hindus and Tibetan monks. Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the Dalai Lama arrived here in May 1960, to live and establish the Tibetan government-in-exile. It is a vibrant and fascinating place to visit.

It is a 9km climb from Mcleod Ganj to Triund, located at a height of 2,827m/9,275ft above sea level. It is a steep, but straight forward ascent, with the path veering off to the right beyond Dharamkot. The views of Dhauladhar from here are stunning. You begin at 1,750m/5,741ft and walk through cedar trees, as you gain height these give way to rhododendron and oak trees. If going all the way to Triund proves a little too strenuous, you can always walk to the half way point, at Major View Café, 2,300m/7,546ft, and then return the same way. It takes about 2-3 hours to reach this halfway point. You may see the Monal pheasant on your walk - the state bird of Himachal Pradesh. The valley is also home to black bears.

The walk is along a very good path, and you have excellent views of the mountains in front, Mcleod Ganj below and you will be able to see the green roof of the Dalai Lama's home. Triund is an important base camp for those wanting to go from Kangra Valley to Chamba Valley. From here you can see the point where locals cross the Indrahar Pass, 4,425m/14,518ft on their way to Chamba. The snow-covered peaks of the Dhauladhar range rise on either side to approximately 4,900m/16,000ft.

In the late afternoon, you can visit the main Buddhist temple in Mcleod Ganj, situated opposite the present abode of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. The temple has three main images about three metres tall: Lord Buddha or Shakyamuni is gilded in bronze, Padmasambhava and Avlokiteshvara are in silver with eleven faces, one thousand arms and one thousand eyes.

Overnight: Grace Cottage or Nomadic Inn, Dharamsala (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Sightseeing tour of Dharamsala. Drive to Palampur, 35kms - 2 hours.

As the drive to Palampur is short, you will have plenty of time in the morning to complete your sightseeing of Dharamsala, which should include a visit to The Norbulingka Institute, a registered trust functioning under the Chairmanship of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. It is dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture in both its literary and artistic forms. The skills preserved and passed on at Norbulingka include statue-making, thangka-painting, appliqué and tailoring, woodcarving, carpentry and metal craft. The masters teaching these arts are true artists and intent primarily on preserving their heritage, passing it on to a new generation of artists.

The drive to Palampur takes approximately 2 hours, with great views of the Dhauladhar range and tea plantations whilst approaching Palampur.

Overnight: Fortune Park, Palampur (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Walk to Buddhist Monastery from Bir.

It is a 45 minute drive to Bir, the landing area for paragliders coming in from Billing, one of the finest sites for hang gliding in the world. The walk starts from Bir with a gentle descent through lovely Kangri villages. It is a beautiful walk through tea gardens which descend into alpine meadows and newly planted pine forests. The trail is fairly well-marked and very gentle. You cross the stream and walk up to the village, which is known for the monastery, which houses the 17th Karmapa in exile from Tibet. Birds you may encounter include kingfishers, vultures and jungle fowl. The monastery houses an enormous statue of Buddha and the Lama is happy for you to take photographs inside.

Overnight: Fortune Park, Palampur (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Walk to Billing. Drive to Manali, 201kms - 6½ hours.

Today you will walk from Bir to Billing, the popular paragliding spot. It is the site for the international hang gliding and paragliding competitions held every year by Himachal Tourism and boasts excellent views. You return to Bir at the base of the valley, about 45 minutes' drive from the hotel, and from here it's a straight walk up the mountain. It takes approximately 2-3 hours to get to the top at Billing, 2,300m/7,546ft, where you are rewarded for your ascent with brilliant views. You are walking through forest all the way up on fairly rocky terrain and may well see Pashmina goats en route. You pass the small temple of the 7 Sisters, worshipped by the locals, and then continue to the alpine meadows of Billing. You can see the entire Kangra Valley, Pong Dam reservoir and Bir Monastery.

In the afternoon drive to Manali (about 6½ hours) via Mandi. This is a scenic drive up the Kullu valley, famed for its apples, towards Manali.

Overnight: Mayflower Hotel or The Lama House, Manali (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Day walk in Manali.

Today you can take a lovely walk via old Manali and the right bank of river Beas, all the way up to the Solang Valley. Time permitting, you can walk towards the Solang Glacier, and then drive back after lunch to Manali via the hot springs at Vashisht.

Overnight: Mayflower Hotel or The Lama House, Manali (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Drive to Shimla, 290kms - 9 hours.

After breakfast, you make the long drive to Shimla.

Shimla is one of the few places in the world where an enormous amount of history and heritage has been distilled into such a small area in so short a time. The town came into being in the first quarter of the 19th Century and some four decades later became the summer capital of the British Raj. Until the coming of India's independence in 1947, momentous events and memorable architecture packed the town. The town has one of the largest pedestrianised centres for strolling and shopping anywhere in the world - the Mall. Scandal Point remains the hub of Shimla's social life and is said to be so named after the daughter of a British Commander-in-Chief. The daughter eloped from the spot with the Maharaja of Patiala!

Overnight: Clarkes Hotel or WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa, Shimla (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: At leisure in Shimla.

Today you are at liberty to do your own thing. You could take a stroll along The Mall, soaking up the general ambience and flavour of the British Raj and do some last-minute shopping. There are many interesting heritage walks around Shimla and your guide will be pleased to suggest suitable routes and hire a local guide for you, if required.

Overnight: Clarkes Hotel or WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa, Shimla (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Walk to Kotidar from Mashobra. Visit Wild Flower Hall.

This morning you drive to Mashobra (14km, 45 minutes) to the start point of the walk. The town is known for the first apple cultivation in the state by the British. Weather permitting you will enjoy a beautiful view of the Dhauladhar and the Pir Panjal range. You start your walk going downhill to the village of Deothi, part of which is also known as Shivpur after Lord Shiva. The village has a small temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. After crossing the village, the terrain is almost flat until you reach the village of Moolkoti. This village also houses the Moolkoti Temple named after a local deity. You walk for another hour until you reach Kanda village and then start a gradual climb for an hour until the village of Kotidar. You meet the vehicles here and drive back to Shimla with a visit on the way to the Wild Flower Hall, an old British property set in beautiful surroundings and now a 5* health spa run by the Oberoi Group of Hotels.

Overnight: Clarks Hotel or WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa, Shimla (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Toy train journey to Kandaghat. Drive to Chandigarh, 113kms. Train to Delhi.

The journey by train from Shimla to Kandaghat recreates the old world charm associated with journeys on mountain railways. This track still has the grace of an age when people travelled in leisure and savoured every moment of it. It departs Shimla late morning and arrives at Kandaghat at about lunchtime.

It was a newspaper correspondent who conceived the idea of a railway line here in November 1847. A passionate plea in the Delhi Gazette by this journalist advocated the provision of a railway line to Shimla. He wrote, "we may then see these cooler regions become the permanent seat of a government daily invigorated by a temperature adapted to refresh an European constitution, and keep the mental power in a state of health, alike beneficial of rulers and the ruled". The 96 km railway line was opened on 9 November 1903. Three years of labour by dedicated engineers and labourers was put in to achieve this astounding feat. The hill track passes over 864 bridges, through 102 tunnels and around 900 sharp curves. You will be travelling on the special rail car for tourists, which is a small tram that seats 30 people.

The track descends from Shimla's cool climes to Kandaghat, and crosses through beautiful hillsides, lush green meadows, and fields of capsicum. Your journey to Kandaghat takes approximately one hour, and your driver will be waiting for you here to take you on your onward journey to Chandigarh. You will have lunch en route from Shimla to Chandigarh, then take the Kalka Shatabdi train departing Chandigarh at 1820 and arriving Delhi at 2140. An evening meal will be provided for you on the train. A transfer will await you at the train station in Delhi to take you to a hotel near the airport.

Overnight: Holiday Inn New Delhi Airport or Lemon Tree Premier (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Fly to London.

After breakfast you will take a mid-morning group transfer to catch your flight to London. **(Meals: B)**

Our grading system

Gentle Walking, Indian Hill Stations & the Golden Temple is graded as a Gentle walking holiday, as described below.

Gentle
Trips within this grade typically mix sightseeing with easy-paced half and/or full day walks. On these trips, walks will be on relatively low altitude trails, for a duration of around 4-6 hours. On all of our Gentle graded trips, some ascent and descent should be anticipated, and there may occasionally be a longer walking day. Holidays within this grade generally use hotels and comfortable lodges although a few do have some nights camping.

These holidays are suitable for people who enjoy easy-paced walks in the British countryside or exploring on foot rather than in a vehicle.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ 14 x breakfast, 12 x lunches, 12 x dinners
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation on a twin-share basis.
- ✓ An English-speaking Indian guide
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfers
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms gilet
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- × Travel insurance
- × Visa fees
- × No breakfast on Day 2
- × Lunch and evening meals in Amritsar
- × Tips
- × If you're travelling alone, and we're unable to pair you with a same sex client on this holiday, a single supplement will apply.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.

Holiday Inn New Delhi Airport or Lemon Tree Premier

In Delhi we use a small selection of hotels close to the International Airport. The Holiday Inn offers the facilities you would expect from a good quality hotel. It is also just a short walk from a metro station. The Lemon Tree Premier offers a good standard of comfort and convenience. Rooms are bright and spacious with tea/coffee makers, mini bars and free Wi-Fi. The hotel has a spa, pool, cafe, pan-Asian restaurant and trendy bar.

Mrs Bandhari's Guest House, Amritsar

This is a quirky but fun place. A converted British Officers' Mess in a quiet location. Large gardens, swimming pool and a complex of old buildings. The rooms are basic but tastefully decorated with rudimentary air conditioning. The food is great. A piece of real India! Family run, complete with water buffalo and friendly dogs.

Judge's Court, Pragpur

This splendid manor was designed in the best Indo-European tradition and completed in 1918. It stands in an eight acre orchard, just a short walk from the ancestral courtyard. It has nine rooms all tastefully decorated in simple elegance. The Judge's Court is run by the owning family and offers a rare kind of intimate hospitality.

Grace Cottage or Nomadic Inn, Dharamsala

Grace Cottage Hotel is a former country manor built 200 year ago in the traditional style of the hills and once the home of Mehr Chand Mahajan, the first Chief Justice of India. The hotel has well furnished rooms with all facilities and staying here you will be immersed in its old world charm. The hotel has fine views of the Kangra valley and Pongdam Lake.

Alternatively you will stay at the Nomadic Hotel which is located in the scenic hills of Dharamsala. It offers guests a welcome blend of modern amenities and old-world charm. The hotel is a favourite among outdoor enthusiasts with beautiful mountain views and a several walking trails. Rooms are tastefully decorated and offier contemporary comforts including coffee/tea making facilities and free Wi-Fi. There is an on-site restaurant serving international dishes and a rooftop bar and terrace. The hotel also has a small museum displaying costumes, artwork and artefacts of the local Gaddi Tribe.

Fortune Park, Palampur

Centrally located in Palampur the Fortune Park enjoys easy accessibility coupled with wonderful mountain views. Tasteful, contemporary rooms come with a good range of amenities including Wi-Fi, and some have small balconies.. The hotel has a delightful upper-level sun terrace, plus a multi-cuisine restaurant, micro brewery, bar, and pastry shop. There is also an indoor pool, gym and spa facilities.

Mayflower Hotel or The Lama House, Manali

The Mayflower sits in a comparatively quiet location in Manali at the top end of town and up the hill, backing onto forest. A long-time favourite of Mountain Kingdoms, it has large en suite rooms featuring lots of pine cladding, lovely verandahs and log fires. The hotel offers a very good standard of food and service.

Alternatively we use the Lama House.This hotel was formerly a small Tibetan Buddhist centre for meditation and learning and it retains an air of peace and tranquility in a beautiful setting, high above Manali town. It feels more like a family home than a hotel with just six cosy bedrooms as well as a coffee lounge and a library bar. Meals are served in the dining room or can be taken in the garden and are made using fresh ingredients picked from the hotel's own vegetable patch

WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa, Shimla

Situated in a quiet forested location, the 5 star Elysium Hotel provides an oasis of calm. There are great views from the greenhouse-style roof restaurant, and the level of service and the food are excellent. Even the standard rooms have a touch of the luxurious with plush furnishings, hand-painted artworks and all modern amenities.

Meal arrangements

Bed and Breakfast in Amritsar. All meals elsewhere included except for breakfast on Day 2 (14 x breakfasts, 12 x lunches, 12 x dinners).

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

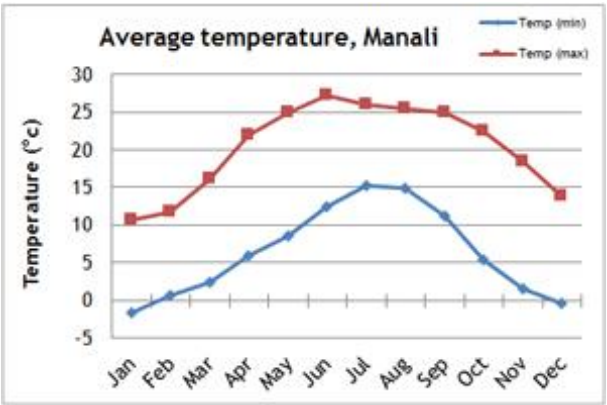
Further information

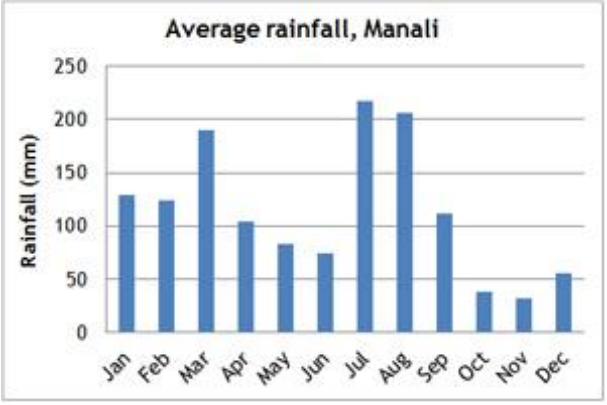
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

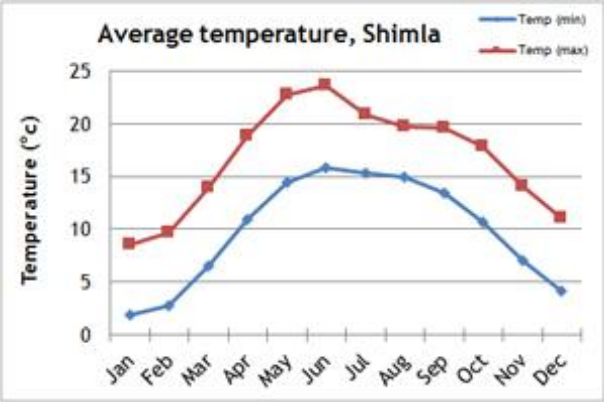
The nature of adventure travel

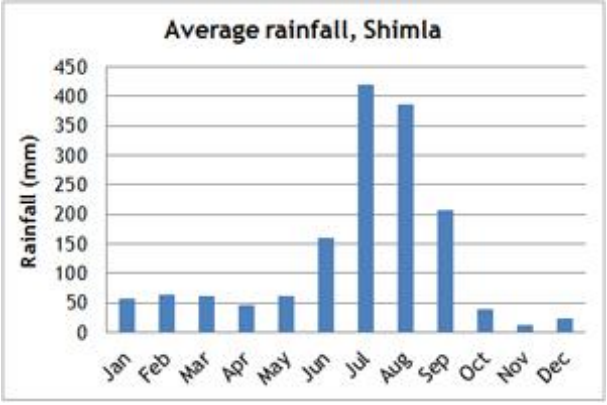
Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information









Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Additional accommodation in Delhi

If you would like to stay longer in Delhi we can arrange additional nights and upgrades from our selection of first rate hotels such as the Oberoi Maidens in the city or Claridges Hotel in New Delhi.

Agra, Taj Mahal & Jaipur

We offer various extensions to Agra, from a one-day visit to see the majestic Taj Mahal to a six-day trip to visit both the Taj and the Amber Fort at Jaipur. All options travel to Agra on the Shatabdi Express and include the services of an English speaking guide, sightseeing and private transport.

Ranthambore National Park

Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan is one of the finest national parks in northern India. It has a diverse range of habitats attracting a fantastic variety of wildlife including tigers, leopard, bears and monkeys as well as a large number of exotic birds. We can arrange a three night stay at a jungle camp from where you can enjoy many wildlife watching activities such as nature walks, jeep safaris and bird watching.

Corbett National Park

Corbett was India's first national Park and hosts a spectacular range of mammals, reptiles and birds including a large population of Royal Bengal tigers, elephants and leopard. For this extension, you take the train to Ramnagar for a three night stay at a lovely lodge with a full programme of elephant-back and jeep safaris, jungle walks and bird watching.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- We have created a unique and highly varied itinerary on which you will drive through rural India and the Himalayan foothills, see the home town of the Dalai Lama, visit Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist temples, walk the Mall in Shimla, bathe in hot springs, travel on mountain railways and busily immerse yourself in all things that make up the 'Indian experience'.
- You stay in converted palaces, heritage properties and a quirky but delightfully characterful guest house. Culture and comfort combined!
- Your guide will be an English-speaking Indian leader with knowledge and first-hand experience of the regions you will travel through.
- There is plenty of walking – at least seven good walks plus plenty of walking to see the sights in towns such as Amritsar and Shimla. An active holiday but nothing too strenuous.
- The day walks are off-the-beaten-track and you are unlikely to see many other westerners on them.
- We have a maximum group size of 12 to ensure all the benefits of a genuine small group travel experience.
- We have a wealth of travel experience at Mountain Kingdoms. If you have any questions about this holiday, contact Niki on 01543 844400 who researched this trip and would be very happy to help.
- As part of our responsible tourism commitment, we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and other exciting tours and activities.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say

It was well organised, in a great area where we're able to visit temples and other religious buildings from several different religions. We liked the small group, and the packed itinerary - although we still managed to feel relaxed.
-MissyG

What we enjoyed about travelling with Mountain Kingdoms was the varied hotels, some quite simple but lovely. We enjoyed the walking. Lucky with the fellow guest as we all got on well.
-Mr & Mrs L, Somerset

We loved visiting the Golden Temple in the evening which was amazing, as was the scenery and the people we met on our journey through Northern India. Also wonderful to visit at last the beautiful and historical Shimla.
-Christopher Milton, Surrey

Well organised, excellent information, personal service. The two holidays I have been on with MK have been most enjoyable and informative.
-Ms W, Buckinghamshire

The trek was a really enjoyable experience. The walks were wonderfully varied and gave insight into village life and rural landscapes normally overlooked by higher altitude treks. The sometimes quirky, sometimes luxurious hotels added to the experience. The overall package involving drives to interesting areas, visits to temples, the hotels and the lovely walks was outstanding.
-Mr & Mrs D, South Yorkshire

Everything was superb, attention to detail, not cutting corners, quality of service, interesting and varied itinerary.
-Mrs T, Dyfed

From start to finish everything was superb. All hotels were varied and of a high standard; food arrangements excellent and walking was in wonderful woodland areas as well as through villages off-the-beaten-track. Delhi, Agra, Jaipur extension was extremely well-organised. All staff helpful & informative and top quality hotels. What really made this special for us was the driver - Bachan Singh who many times went out of his way to give us extra time and additional surprising temples etc. The group of eight like-minded people was just right. Thank you again for a wonderful adventure.
-Mr & Mrs B, West Midlands

Mountain Kingdoms – distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday – it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to a hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT

For almost four decades, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now have trips to all corners of the globe but are conscious that our holidays can have a detrimental impact on the world around us and want to do all we can to reduce that.

We have focused our main responsible tourism efforts on reducing the carbon emissions produced by our holidays, and counterbalancing this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole.

Carbon offsetting

Since 2007, we have donated a percentage of our client and staff flight costs to the Ecoan tree planting project in Peru. Ecoan are a trusted local NGO who use the funds directly to purchase seedling trees with the long-term goal of restoring 2.5 million acres of Andean land.

Ecoan maintains over 100 tree nurseries across Peru where their tree saplings are grown and then transported to planting sites during the rainy season. They use native trees such as the Polylepis, as these can survive at high altitudes. As well as sequestering carbon, they help protect against soil erosion, landslides and the effects of extreme weather on local crops. As such, they are enormously beneficial to the economic well-being of the surrounding communities. This is very much a community-led conservation project, with the local Quechuan people coming together to plant tens of thousands of saplings in the Andean highlands where they live. During the annual Queuña Raymi (tree festival), over 150,000 native trees can be planted in a single day!

For every person booking a long-haul, flight inclusive holiday with us, Ecoan can purchase and plant 20 trees in Peru, and for short-haul flights, 7 trees. Typically, we send over $7,000 per year to Ecoan, which is over 7,000 trees.

Reducing carbon emissions

- ✓ We offer the majority of our clients a free, filtered Water-to-Go bottle to help reduce the need for single-use plastic bottles during their travels.
- ✓ We predominantly use locally-owned hotels and guesthouses rather than multinational chains. In some of our destinations, such as Bhutan, we use homestays. Not only does this type of small-sized, locally-owned accommodation have a much-reduced carbon footprint, but it also helps support communities.
- ✓ We evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel-efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, choose direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We have stopped offering unnecessary optional flights, such as Everest sightseeing. We try to minimise internal flights where possible.
- ✓ We recycle as much of our office waste as possible and have introduced a client portal to reduce paperwork and to make it easier for clients to manage their trips online.

Wider commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism

- ✓ We are signatories to the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside other like-minded travel companies to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.
- ✓ We will continue to support several charities with whom we have a long-standing relationship, such as Shiva Charity in Nepal.

Over the years, we have given sizeable payments to emergency relief when a disaster has occurred in the countries we operate in. We always try to ensure that these funds go directly to those who need them most to help rebuild their lives.