

# Spiti Valley Jeep Safari



## Highlights

This 6 day jeep safari takes you through “Little Tibet”, as the Spiti Valley is sometimes known, a high, remote region in Himachal Pradesh surrounded on all sides by the craggy peaks of the Himalayas. A land of space and deep blue skies, where little villages dot the rocky slopes and prayer-flags flutter in the dry wind, this is a place that truly speaks to the spirit.

The geological landscape is by far the most immediately striking feature of the Spiti Valley: the massive mountain peaks reaching above a broad, bowl-shaped valley completely dwarf any signs of human activity. The sense of sheer space is colossal, with an otherworldly feel due to the almost complete absence of trees and oceanic deep-blue sky. This is one of India's least-populated regions, with tiny villages of fewer than fifty houses peppered here and there, and isolated monasteries built on rocky outcrops gazing out into the silence. A place of desolate beauty, where Himalayan Blue Sheep and Snow Leopards eke out a precarious life among the rocks, this is a land that leaves a lasting impression on those who visit.

From the moment you cross Rohtang Pass, you will be transported into another world: the vast contoured rocky landscape is completely different from the lush green hills of Manali below. You'll visit Tabo Monastery, at over 1000 years old, the oldest in Spiti, and Dhankar, its name meaning “cliff fort” with its old monastery spectacularly located on a rocky ridge overlooking the confluence of two rivers. You'll explore high deserts and pastures where you may see Himalayan Blue Sheep, and experience the homely, timeless hospitality of Spitian village life. You'll also get to visit the largest monastery in the valley, Key Gumpa, which is piled up defensively on a rocky outcrop, originally a fortress monastery built to protect the monks from invaders.

## Is it for me?

This is a tour through some very high-altitude areas, and on the first and last days you'll be spending around ten hours in a jeep on winding mountain roads. You might think that this could be a rather testing experience, but the ever changing landscape makes for a truly fascinating journey. For anyone in reasonable health with a robust sense of humour, the jeep rides can be fun, and the landscape alone is well, well worth it. If you want to feel dwarfed by raw natural majesty, Spiti is a place that will give you what you're after. This small region shares with Ladakh a culture that is unique in its blend of North Indian and Tibetan influences, and the memory of the incredible blue of the sky will remain with you long after you leave.

The tour operator who organises this Spiti Valley jeep safari has responsible tourism at the heart of their business. Working closely with local communities, they seek to ensure that tourism has a positive, rather than a detrimental effect on the environment and people. They are also involved in specific ecotourism initiatives including working on restoring the Dhankar monastery, encouraging and aiding women in promoting and selling local handicrafts and promoting the use of green houses and solar passive homes.

We know a lot of people claim responsible practices, but this really is a holiday where you get to see a hidden part of the world and, in doing so, support local people and communities.

## Accommodation

You'll be staying in a hotel or guesthouse for two nights, in Kaza, with a simple, but clean and comfortable room complete with attached bathroom and toilet. For the other nights of the trip you'll stay in village homestays, where you're likely to find that true warmth and

Prices from

**278** GBP (6 days) per person

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hospitality that still exists within these communities that are isolated from the outside world for much of the year. Not only will you be comfortable, but you'll feel genuinely welcome. Hot water is available on request.

Food is either local Spitian specialities (the cuisine, like the culture, has a definite tibetan influence) or, if you prefer, more familiar North Indian food such as dal, rice and chappati)

## Itinerary

### Day 1: Manali to Kaza (overnight at Kaza)

After an early start, you'll drive over the Rohtang pass and descend into the valley of the Chandra river, past Chhatru, Batal and over the Kunzum Pass dividing Lahaul and Spiti. With some stops for sightseeing, you'll reach Kaza by evening.

### Day 2: Kaza to Tabo to Dhankar (overnight at Dhankhar Monastery Guesthouse)

After breakfast you'll leave Kaza for Tabo, famous for its Monastery which celebrated 1000 years in 1996. After visiting the Monastery you'll head to Dhankhar village, ancient capital of Spiti, with its ancient Monastery perched precariously between unique wind eroded structures.

### Day 3: Dhankar to Lhalung to Demul (overnight at Demul homestay)

After Dhankhar you'll head on to Lhalung, largest village of the Lingti valley, where you'll visit the unique Serkhang (Golden Temple) then head onto Demul for the night where you'll stay in a village homestay. In the evening you can get a glimpse into Spitian cultural life by participating in Spiti's song and dance forms.\*

### Day 4: Demul – Komic (overnight at Komic homestay)

Today you'll get up early, with an option of trekking or adopting the local mode of transport, Yaks\*. As Spiti is a high-altitude region, yaks are recommended. En route you'll cross two passes with breathtaking views of Spiti's highest peaks. The route primarily traverses through alpine pastures. You'll explore the Trans-Himalayan Deserts and grazing pastures of local livestock and Blue Sheep. Komic is among the highest villages in Asia, with one of the highest monasteries in the world.

### Day 5: Komic – Key - Kaza (overnight at Kaza guesthouse/hotel)

Today you'll head by jeep to Key monastery, the largest in Spiti. Afterwards you can head back to Kaza either by jeep or by mountain bike\*. In Kaza you can use the rest of the day to relax and to roam the markets for handicrafts.

### Day 6: Kaza to Manali (overnight at Manali)

After breakfast you'll drive back to Manali by jeep along the same route that you took to reach Kaza. If time permits you can take a short detour\* after crossing Kunzam Pass to Chandra Tal, lake of the moon goddess.

Note: add-on activities (\*) entail an additional charge.

## Details

### Getting there

The tour operator can arrange to pick you up and drop you off at Delhi. There are flights to Delhi from most major UK airports. If you want to travel from Delhi to Manali under your own steam, you can fly to Bhunter Airport, then take a taxi to Manali; alternatively, take a train from Delhi to Chandigarh then a jeep taxi to Manali from there.

### Price includes

All meals starting Day 1 dinner to Day 6 breakfast, all accommodation on a twin sharing basis starting Day 1 to Day 5, guide starting Day 1 to Day 6, all jeep transfers starting Day 1 to Day 6.

### Price details

If you are joining one of the fixed departures, the cost is 19550 INR per person.

If you are looking to complete this trip outside of the fixed departure dates, the cost is 29350 per person, based on 2 people departing.

This price does not include tax.

### When is best

If there are more than 2 of you, the trip can depart on any date. Bear in mind that May - October are the best months to visit.

### Typical Duration

6 days

### Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

### Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed

