



FABLED HILL STATIONS & THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

Revealing stories at every turn, India's fabled hill stations will leave you spellbound. Step back in time in stunning Shimla, once the summer retreat of the British Raj.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Indian Subcontinent, India



11 days from AU\$6,970 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Revealing stories at every turn, India's fabled hill stations will leave you spellbound. Step back in time in stunning Shimla, once the summer retreat of the British Raj. Savour delicate infusions in the tea capital of Northern India, let the artists of Andretta ignite your creativity, and discover a special kind of tranquillity in the home to the Dalai Lama. Wind through the mountains on the Himalayan Queen train, one of the finest engineering feats in India, and witness the theatrical flag lowering ceremony on the Wagah border. This is India at its most extraordinary.

Journey Highlights

- Board the Himalayan Queen and ride the century-old metre gauge line
- Breathe in the cedar-scented air of Shimla, summer capital of the Raj
- Admire the home of the Dalai Lama, McLeod Ganj
- Ignite your creativity in the artist village of Andretta
- Stay on a working tea estate in Palampur, India's tea capital



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Delhi

Namaste and welcome to Delhi, India's capital and northern gateway. Enjoy a warm A&K welcome and private transfer to your stylish hotel, an oasis of calm just moments from the vibrant restaurants, shops and bars of Gurugram (Gurgaon). Once a sleepy suburb of New Delhi, Gurugram is now among the fastest growing cities in India and home to over 250 of the Fortune 500 companies. Drop your bags, relax and soak in the views over the azure reflection pool or explore your surroundings spread over nine acres.

The Oberoi, Gurgaon

Day 2: Delhi - Chandigarh - Shimla

Return to the airport and fly to Chandigarh, designed by the Swiss-French modernist architect, Le Corbusier, and independent India's first planned city, known as 'The City Beautiful'. Embark on a tour of the unusual Rock Garden, a spectacle of sustainable design. Marvel at man-made waterfalls and sculptures made entirely from discarded scrap material. After lunch, stop at the Open Hand Monument, designed by Le Corbusier and built to commemorate peace and prosperity. Continue by road to the striking Himalayan hill station of Shimla. Once the British Raj's summer capital, Shimla offers an immersive look at India's past, beginning with your luxury heritage hotel.

The Oberoi Wildflower Hall | Meals: BL

Day 3: Shimla

Unveil the many remnants of British colonial life today. Start at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, also known as the Viceregal Lodge, formerly used by the Viceroy during the summer months until independence. Roam the immense Scottish structure and its beautiful botanical gardens, and glimpse photographs from the last years of the Raj. Continue exploring Shimla on foot, taking in the colonial architecture, museums, churches and the Jhako Temple. Spend your afternoon at leisure, revelling in the history of your luxurious hotel or continuing your exploration of the city.

The Oberoi Wildflower Hall | Meals: B

Day 4: Shimla

Today, you step aboard the famous Himalayan Queen train. Journey deep into the Himalayan foothills through tunnels and over bridges along the century-old metre gauge line, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the finest feats of engineering in India. Your journey ends at Kandaghat station, after which you will return to Shimla. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure, relax in your hotel pool and spa, or enjoy an optional activity (additional charge). Choose from a short trek through the local rhododendron and cedar forests or take the cultural trail to Rudyard Kipling's house and the Army Heritage Museum.

The Oberoi Wildflower Hall / Meals: B

Day 5: Shimla - Palampur

Say goodbye to Shimla as you travel to Palampur, known as the tea capital of Northern India, enjoying a boxed lunch provided by your hotel as you travel. Settle into your beautiful lodge in the Wah Tea Estate, established in 1857 and now the largest working tea estate in the Kangra Valley. Take a guided tour, watching the Wah tea ladies pluck only two leaves and a bud before trying your hand at this intricate skill. Visit the factory and appreciate the processes of withering, rolling, fermenting, drying and sorting. Stroll through the organic farm, which supplies the lodge with fresh produce. Before heading to the gardens surrounded by tea bushes for an aromatic tea tasting.

The Lodge at Wah / Meals: BLD

Day 6: Palampur

Stimulate your creativity at Andretta, a tranquil village and artists' colony. Step inside the mudbrick home of Irish writer and dramatist Norah Richards, who established the village in the 1920s. See the colourful paintings of Sobha Singh at the small family-run gallery and try your hand at throwing a pot in Andretta Pottery. Later, ride the narrow gauge Kangra railway for a glimpse of local village life against the backdrop of the Himalaya. Continue to Baijnath and marvel at the quietly famous Shiva temple, a beautiful example of early medieval architecture built in the 13th century. Finally, admire the brightly coloured intricate paintings that adorn the walls of Tashi Jong Monastery, the homely residence of Tibetan refugees before returning to your accommodation.

The Lodge at Wah / Meals: BD

Day 7: Palampur - Dharamshala

Begin your journey to Dharamshala, on the edge of the Himalayas, with a stop at a traditional nomadic settlement of the Gaddi tribe. Discover the Norbulingka Institute, dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture. Watch the Tibetan artisans and their apprentices as they practice the ancient Buddhist art forms of statue-making, thangka painting and appliqué, as well as woodcarving, tailoring and weaving. Step inside the temple to see some of the finest thangka frescoes. Continue to your hotel near McLeod Ganj, home to the Dalai Lama and the centre of Little Tibet, with beautiful views of the snow-capped Dhauladhar mountain range and the pristine Dharamshala valley.

Hyatt Regency Dharamshala / Meals: BL

Day 8: Dharamshala

Explore the Dalai Lama's monastery, Tsuglag Khang, the largest Tibetan temple outside Tibet and home to around 200 monks. Be mesmerised by the prayer wheels, colourful décor, and the Tibetan-style architecture. Continue to the small Gyuto monastery, the recent home of the Karmapa, the Tibetan spiritual leader. This evening, join locals on a Kora Walk around the Dalai Lama temple and meet a Lama, if you wish.

Hyatt Regency Dharamshala / Meals: B

Day 9: Dharamshala - Amritsar

Today you journey to Amritsar, home of the magnificent Golden Temple, the most important pilgrimage site of Sikhism. Known by locals as Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple is surrounded by the holy waters of the Amrit Sarovar and devotees travel from across the world to bathe and pay their respects to the holy Sikh scripture within. Spend your afternoon at leisure before an evening visit to the Golden Temple for the auspicious Palki Sahib night ceremony. Witness the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book) being carried from the main shrine to the inner sanctum amid the chanting of hymns.

Taj Swarna / Meals: B

Day 10: Amritsar

Rise early to visit the shimmering Golden Temple as morning prayers begin. Step inside the communal kitchen to see the Sikh community come together to prepare simple meals for the 35,000 pilgrims who visit the temple daily. Wind through the narrow lanes of the Hall Bazaar and pay your respects at Jallianwala Bagh, the memorial commemorating the 1919 massacre. Spend the rest of your afternoon at leisure or take a culinary tour into local neighbourhoods to sample the flavours of Punjabi cuisine (additional charge). This evening, drive to the Wagah border between India and Pakistan to witness the changing of the guard. Join hundreds of people to witness the theatrical pageant as the flags are lowered on both sides of the border. The ceremony has been taking place since 1959.

Taj Swarna / Meals: B

Day 11: Depart Amritsar

Your journey to India's fabled hill stations comes to an end with a private transfer to the airport for your onward journey.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

The Oberoi, Gurgaon



Innovative and meticulous in its design, The Oberoi Gurgaon is a contemporary hotel oozing style and luxury. Sitting within the prime business and shopping districts of Gurgaon, and just 15 minutes from the airport, the Oberoi is an oasis of calm and tranquillity, enclosed by landscaped gardens featuring sleek pools, reflecting its unique surroundings. The convenient location means bars and restaurants are just a short walk while the cultural heart of Delhi is just a 30-minute drive.

Why we like it

- 202 spacious and light-filled guestrooms
- Range of dining opportunities, fresh seafood and mouth-watering patisseries
- 9 acres of private landscaped gardens and Olympic-size swimming pool
- 24-hour spa and gym

The Oberoi Wildflower Hall, Shimla



The former residence of Lord Kitchener, rebuilt to a new magnificence, Wildflower Hall recreates the grand style of the colonial era. Wood paneling and original artwork create an aura of old world charm amidst astonishing landscapes - which make for stunning views from the hotel's elevated location.

Teak wood floors, hand knotted rugs and rich furnishings complemented by spectacular views make the rooms very special retreats. Rich furnishings reflect the colonial heritage of the hotel and respect the traditional skills of local craftsmen, whilst every room has a spacious marble bathroom with a bathtub and separate shower.

This hotel is a member of 'The Leading Hotels of the World' and part of the prestigious Oberoi group - facts which are reflected in the service as well as the wonderful interiors.

Why we like it

- The rooms and suites offer spectacular views over cedar forests, mountain ranges or gardens
- Situated at 8,250 feet in the magnificent Himalayas, Wildflower Hall is a fairytale luxury resort set in 22 acres of virgin woods of pine and cedar
- Two restaurants offer Indian, Pan-Asian and Continental cuisine
- The Oberoi Spa offers holistic treatments based on Ayurveda, Oriental and Western traditions in private spa suites or pavilions ensconced in the cedar forest
- The hotel's elevated outdoor pool offers astonishing views of the mountains and valleys

Abercrombie & Kent

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