

The Snow Leopard Trail

Chandigarh, Narkanda, Kalpan, Mane, Kibber, Shimla



Straddling Tibet and India, “Spiti”, which literally means “The Middle Land”, is a cold desert mountain valley located high in the Himalayan Mountains, in the north-eastern part of Himachal Pradesh. One of the main attractions of Spiti is the Snow Leopard – one of nature’s most beautiful animals, but as elusive as the mythical Yeti. Creatures who live high up in the snow line, they come down, across the snow covered terrain to Kibber National Park and Pin Forest reserve in winters. A breathtaking journey through one of the last outposts of India, unravaged by civilization. Wander along picturesque, yet remote villages, visit monasteries dating back a thousand years, meet amazingly warm and kind people who live in the severest of conditions, and experience an eclectic culture and cuisine.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ An opportunity to see one of the most elusive animals of nature – The Snow Leopard
- ❖ We visit the only place in the world where one need not trek to encounter this majestic creature in its natural habitat.
- ❖ Journey into one of the most beautiful yet undiscovered - the Spiti Valley.
- ❖ Accompanied by wildlife experts, experienced guides

Day 01 – Chandigarh to Narkanda

Arrive at Chandigarh Airport. We drive to the famed Pal Dhaba. Pal Dhaba has been serving up traditional, home cooked Punjabi food since the 1960s and is sure to feed you to your heart's content.

Post lunch, we drive to Narkanda in Innovas (3 guests to a vehicle). Narkanda is located 30 kms ahead of Kufri and we check into the valley-facing Kufri Holiday Resort where a warm dinner and room await. Don't let the excitement and anticipation of things to come rob you of a good night's sleep. Dinner at Hotel.

Overnight in Kufri Holiday Resort, Himachal Pradesh

Day 02 – Narkanda to Kalpa

In the coming week, snow is going to be our constant companion and enthusiasts have the option of taking ski lessons in the morning at the Narkanda Ski Centre. After a late breakfast, we'll drive to Kalpa in Maruti Gypsies (the only vehicle capable of handling the snow and rough terrain of Spiti Valley).

Lunch at Rampur will be our introduction to Kinnauri cuisine. Some of the staple dishes here include Thukpa, Momo, Chowmien, Poti Chawal, Meat Chawal and Chicken Chawal. We will also make a few halts for cha (tea). For Cha, a big container full of water is put to boil with wild tea leaves, salt, milk, butter, walnut, almond and spices. This tea, similar to Tibetan buttered salty tea, is supposed to quench thirst and be good for general health. At Kalpa village, we will check into our hotel (this is a basic hotel, but with attached toilets) where our chef will welcome us with piping hot soup. Rooms will be ready and heated.

Overnight at Overnight in Kinner Villa, Kalpa Himachal Pradesh

Day 03 – Kalpa to Mane

Today, After Breakfast, we leave Kinnaur valley and enter Spiti Valley. Post breakfast, we head for Mane, a long and arduous drive which will test the boundaries of mental and physical endurance. As we drive along, we will marvel at the ferocity of nature as well as be mesmerized with its beauty. Our main halt (apart from halts for tea) will be for lunch at a homestay in Nako Village by the scenic Nako Lake. From here, you will also be able to view the Leo Purgil Peak in the distance, standing magnificent, shrouded in white snow.

Post lunch, we continue our exploration and just before Mane, visit the 1000-year old Tabo Monastery, said to be one of the oldest monasteries in India. We will seek audience with the head Lama for his blessings to help us sight the Snow Leopard. A few cups of hot butter tea (a staple Tibetan/ Ladakhi tea which contains salted butter to help fortify against the icy cold temperatures) later, we reach the local homestay at Mane. The locals here live at the mercy of Mother Nature, with humility and respect. We will also have the opportunity to see beautiful tapestry work done by local ladies hung on the walls and to use beautifully embroidered quilts.

Much in contrast to the environment outside, we enter a cozy heated environment (powered by generators that our team has carried along). Hot dinner and we are ready to hit the bed.

Overnight in Local Home Stay, Mane Himachal Pradesh.

Day 04 - Mane to Kibber

Post breakfast today, we leave for Kibber, the main location where we will spend the next 3 days spotting mountain animals and also, hopefully, the snow leopard. En route, be prepared to be bowled over by the vast, barren landscapes, stretching all the way up to the horizon. Stop by the Dhanka Lake and peer into its crystal waters to see a clear reflection of the clouds gently flitting by. Allow yourself a moment of introspection, an opportunity to dwell upon your place in this vast universe. Today, we will also be visiting the picturesque Lalung Village.

Post lunch, we pass Kaza town – the capital of Spiti district. A few shops would be open – including a mini Decathlon - and hence anyone needing to stock up on essentials should pick them up here. From here, Kibber is just an hour away. We reach our homestay early evening and post a rejuvenating hot tea and some momos, can walk around the village and interact with the locals.

Overnight in a Local Home Stay, Kibber Himachal Pradesh

Day 05 & 06- Kibber

We have reached the winter home of the snow leopard. Guided by our spotters, we leave each day post breakfast to sight this magnificent animal. It is commonly said, “Don’t hunt the predator but look for the prey. That’s where the snow leopard lies.” Snow leopards are known to feed on blue sheep, also called Bharal. Keep your eyes peeled for these along with other mountain life like the Ibex, Goral, Mountain Goats and wolves.

We will spend our evenings in the cosy kitchen where the local cooks will treat us to indigenous specialties while the local story **Home Stay, Kibber Himachal Pradesh** tells spin yarns about the mountains.

Overnight in a Local Home Stay

Day 07 – Kibber to Kalpa

We begin a long journey back that will take us away from ancient civilization to modern civilization. We stop at Mane for lunch and reach Kalpa post sundown. The journey would be both tiring and exhilarating, hence, it would be dinner and lights out.

Overnight in Kinner Villa, Kalpa Himachal Pradesh

Day 08 – Kalpa to Shimla

We are on the last day of our journey. Post breakfast, we leave the Kinnaur valley and proceed towards Shimla. As we near Shimla, our phones start ringing again, family and colleagues are again in touch. We have left behind one of the most isolated places on earth, but hopefully carry with us the warmth of its people and humility of its being. We end our evening in Shimla with a celebratory dinner and raise a toast to life, nature and its beauty. Dinner will be at the popular Café Shimla Times on Mall Road, courtesy yours truly.

Overnight in East Bourne Resort, Shimla Himachal Pradesh

Day 09 – Shimla to Chandigarh

After breakfast. Proceed to Chandigarh and treat yourself to another one of Chandigarh’s delights at Pashtun restaurant – famous for its North West Frontier cuisine. After lunch, our team will drop you off at Chandigarh International Airport for your flight back.

*** Return Home with wonderful memories ***

Price per person on a twin-sharing basis: INR 1,53,000

Single supplement: INR 47,000

Departure Dates:

- 1 – 9 Feb 2019
- 11 – 19 Feb 2019
- 21 Feb – 01 Mar 2019

Inclusions

- Accommodation as per the itinerary
- All meals – breakfast, lunch & dinner
- An entourage comprising of experienced guides, Chefs
- Customized meals to suit your tastes
- Room Heaters/hot water bags, provision of electricity at all stay places.
- Experiences at each destination as specified in the itinerary.
- Trained spotters to go ahead
- Agency representatives accompanying the team always in a lead vehicle.
- Airport Transfer in Innovas.
- Travel in Gypsies/Taveras (3 guests to a vehicle) all through the route.
- Provision of refreshments enroute

Exclusions

- Flights into & out of Chandigarh
- Items of a personal nature
- Optional activities
- Alcoholic Beverages or any related expenses.
- Personal Accident/ Medical Insurance Cover, as per the individual's requirements.
- **5% GST**
- Anything not mentioned under “Inclusions”

Map of The Trail:



Notes:

- Standard check in at hotels is at 14h00 onwards. Where necessary we will request an early check-in however, this is not guaranteed. The same applies to check out, which is at 12h00.
- Rates subject to change without prior notice due to circumstances beyond our control e.g. fuel increase
- Price based on a minimum of 10-12 people travelling together

Terms & Conditions

BOOKINGS AND PAYMENTS

1. A deposit 30% of the tour cost per person will be payable at the time of booking. If paying by cheque, please make the cheque payable to Odyssey Tours & Travels.
2. Balance payment is to be made 50 days prior to the start of the tour.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

1. Should you be forced to amend / cancel the booking you must advise us in writing.

2. Payment of the booking deposit constitutes acceptance of our terms and conditions.
3. Once the deposit is paid, a fee of Rs 7500 pp will be non refundable. Any alteration thereafter, whether a change to an existing booking or a change to another tour or departure date, or a cancellation will be subject to payment by you of any costs imposed by any of the suppliers providing the component parts of the tour. If the holiday to which you transfer is more expensive than the one you originally booked, a further deposit will also be payable. Any alteration by you within 50 days of departure will be treated as a cancellation of the original booking and will be subject to cancellation charges.
4. Refunds due can take upto 5 weeks to process.