

COLD DESERT OF SPITI, HIMACHAL PRADESH



TRIP DATE:

TRIP 1: JUN 27-JUL 07, 2015

TRIP 2: OCT 2 – 12, 2015

DURATION:

10 NIGHTS/11 DAYS

PLACES COVERED:

CHANDIGARH – THANEDAR – SANGLA – TABO – RANGRIK – KAZA – CHANDRATAL – MANALI – SOJHA - CHANDIGARH

Let Banjara lead you into a world full of mysteries and unknown places where time has stood still for thousands of years untouched by man. Your journey begins from where the story of apple in India begins. Thanedar (ahead of Shimla) is a lovely little hamlet where Mr. Stokes brought first apple sapling into India from Philadelphia. This is your first destination from where you will be entering into the unknown world free from all the daily routine of our city life. Explore the forests around Thanedar. From here, we go on to the amazing valley in Sangla where we get some of the most beautiful apples in the country and probably the world. Sangla valley opens for 6-7 months before going into hibernation for the winter beneath layers of snow. The place boasts some of the most beautiful flora and fauna and a simply breathtaking setting beside the Baspa River and with views of towering snow capped mountains.

Revel in the lush green beauty of the valley before moving onto the barren landscape of Spiti known as a forbidden country a few years back. Visit the 1008 years old monastery in Tabo or drive to the highest village Gete near Kaza or drive to the serene lake of Chandratal that changes its colours with changing sun position during the day. Experience the feeling of being on top of the world, literally, before descending to Manali for a slice of civilization albeit very briefly. We climb once again toward Jalori pass and stay at Sojha to unwind in the vicinity of Great Himalayan National Park before getting ready to face the world back home.

Dates:	Trip 1: Jun 27- Jul 07, 2015 Trip 2: Oct 2 -12, 2015
Start from:	Chandigarh
End at:	Chandigarh
Distance covered:	1300 kms ex- Chandigarh
Maximum altitude reached:	Kunzum La (4551M)
Best time to Visit:	Mid- June to Mid- October

Meals:
Min/ Max group size:
Permits:

Lunch on day 1 to day 11
12
Foreign Nationals require permit for crossing over to Tabo

ITINERARY:



Day 01:

Chandigarh- Thanedar- 195 kms/ 6-7 hrs

Meet at Chandigarh airport/railway station at 1130 hrs. Drive to Thanedar via Barog, Shimla and Narkanda. Reach Thanedar in the evening. Depending on your travel time, you will be able to see either apple blossoms or apples. Evening around bonfire. Night stay in Banjara Retreat.

Thanedar (7700 ft.) is slightly higher than and the road linking the two runs almost near the crest of the mountain with a gradual ascent. One is constantly treated to a bird's-eye view of the different valleys as the road twists and turns from one spur to another. Below Thanedar, to the north is the Sutlej Valley and beyond it is the snowy massif. Thanedar is where history of apples in India began. Discover the town which is full of apple Orchard everywhere you see.



Day 02:**Thanedar - Sangla- 165 kms/ 6 hrs**

Visit Hatu peak early in the morning. The peak offers excellent views of Shrikhand Mahadev peaks. Back to Thanedar for breakfast, Leave for Sangla around mid-morning. We drive down towards Sutlej River. We drive along the river till Karcham from where once again, we start climbing up the mountains to reach Sangla. Reach Banjara camps situated ahead of Sangla. Evening around a bonfire. Overnight stay at the camp.

Sangla - At a height of 2,700 mts, Sangla town is surrounded by towering mountains on all sides and is set on the banks of the Baspa River that surges through the valley. Walks to discover the amazing fauna and flora of the valley, treks to view snow covered Himalayan peaks, experiencing some of the local culture and traditions, rock climbing, rappelling and river crossing are only some of the delights that are on offer. Surrounded by apple orchards, the campsite has cosy tents and rooms with attached, tiled bathrooms and running hot water. The Retreat (situated right beside the campsite & opened to guests in May 2009) - a two storied stone & wood house in rustic style has large, comfortably furnished and tastefully decorated rooms

**Day 03:****Sangla Visit Chitkul (3,450M) - 20kms**

A day visit to the Chitkul village. This is the last village on the old Indo-Tibetan trade route. From here, we can hike up to Nagasthi, the last border outpost that civilians are allowed to. It is a lovely 2.5 kms walk along a stream. Lunch along the glacier fed mountain stream. Drive back to Camp in the afternoon. Rest of the day at leisure. You could also try your hand at rappelling, rock climbing or river crossing. Evening around a bonfire. Night stay in tents.

**Day 04:****Sangla-Hike to Rakcham**

Today, we go for the signature walk of the valley. Drive to Rakcham village where we cross the river and begin our hike back to the camp. This is a 6-7 kms long hike through thick forests, open skies, streams and walk by the river. Reach back early afternoon. Lunch at camp. Rest after lunch else, try your hand at Rock climbing, rappelling or river crossing. You could also go for a short walk in the surrounding hills. Night stay at Banjara camp and Retreat.

Rakcham Walk - A level-cum-gradually climbing path first takes one to Batseri Village across the Baspa River. A 'dekkho' at the temple and one is quickly out of the village into the forest. After about half an hour the path takes a sharp climb and goes on for thirty minutes where one hits the first 'glacier'. That can be the first 'chota' halt. Across the glacier one quickly melts into the forest and here the path goes gradually up. Half an hour and many fascinating views later the path takes a sudden descent and opens out into the valley. Lo and behold! Another small glacier walk (only till early June) and a balance walking across a few streams later one comes to a plain flat ground. This is generally the mid way break point where we stop briefly for refreshments. Resume the walk after a short break. A big tract of Poplar forest welcomes you as you walk on. The path from here takes a gradual ascent and goes on for 30-40 minutes to level in a forest which gives way to the fields of Rackcham village. The Valley opens up here revealing the snow-clad mountains across which lies Uttaranchal and Tibet depending on which direction one is looking at. Here one has the option to either take the vehicle back to the camp or else walk back on the road to the camp (7 kms/1.5 hrs). On this walk, one gets to see most of the tree and plant variety the valley has to offer. For a regular walker it is a 'long walk' and for the uninitiated it can be termed as a 'good hike'. So at the end of the walk, one is glad to see the vehicles waiting to drive you back to camp and yet many a 5-6 years old have done this without a whimper of protest.



Day 05:

Sangla - Tabo - 200 km / 10 hrs

Today, we leave behind verdant, forest clad mountains as we go over the tree line towards the Spiti region. Stop briefly at Rekong peo to enjoy the fantastic views of Kinner Kailash peak. After driving for about 5 hrs on NH 22, just short of Yangthang, we take a detour, to visit the picturesque Nako Lake and have a picnic lunch by the lakeside. Post -lunch we drive on through breath taking, mountain desert terrain to reach Tabo. Night stay in a guest house.



Day 06:

Tabo- Rangrik via Dhankar 65 kms/2 hrs drive

Visit Tabo monastery early in the morning. Participating in the morning prayers is an experience in itself. Post-breakfast drive down to Dhankar Monastery. Dhankar, the traditional capital of Spiti, sits pretty on a hilltop. The fort here overlooks the Spiti valley and it was used as a jail in olden days. Today, more than 160 lamas reside here. A statue of Dhyana Buddha where four complete figures of Buddha sit back to back is the main attraction of this more than seven-century old monastery. Move on to visit the glorious Tabo Gumpa; reputed to be the oldest (an inscription on a wall here indicates, it was founded in AD 996) continuously functioning Buddhist monastery in India and the Himalayas, with its original decoration and iconographic program intact. Carry on to Rangrik we stay for the night.

Dhankar, the traditional capital of Spiti, sits pretty on a hilltop. The Hill-top fort that overlooks the Spiti Valley also used to serve as a jail in good old days. Today, more than 160 lamas reside here. A statue of Dhyana Buddha where four complete figures of Buddha sit back to back is the main attraction of this more than seven-century old monastery. About an hour's walk (about 3 kms) from here on a slightly uphill track is a small lake that sits languidly in a bowl. The size of the lake in the summer varies every year depending on how much snow the catchment area had in the previous winter.



Day 07:

Rangrik- Ki Gumpa - Kibber - Gete - Rangrik 58 kms drive/ 4-5 hrs for total excursion

After breakfast, visit Ki monastery and Kibber village. Ki gumpa is a Gelugpa sect monastery. Its hilltop position points to a post-thirteenth century construction. The three storied structure consists largely of storage rooms at the bottom level, while the middle floor houses the Dukhang- the assembly hall- and the uppermost floor has another temple and the head Lama's quarters, on one side of an open terrace. The greatest wealth of Ki Gumpa lies in its collection of 'Thangkas' salvaged with difficulty from the devastating raids of the Dogars and the Sikhs in the 19th century. From here a scenic drive takes you into the pasture country of Kibber. The pastures are spread over hundreds of square kilometers. Kibber is small village and is the take off point for the popular trek to Tso Moriri in Ladakh. Further up six kilometers from Kibber, we drive up to a still smaller village of Gete. Consisting of just six houses, it boasts of being the highest village in Asia connected by road. Drive back to the retreat for a late lunch and spend rest of the day at leisure.

Ki is the biggest monastery in Spiti Valley. Situated between Kaza and Kibber, it dominates the Ki village and the Spiti Valley. Ki Monastery (4116M) is a Gelugpa sect monastery. Its hilltop position points to a post-thirteenth century construction. The monks' dwellings rise in a closely packed cluster up the south and east face to the summit, where the main temple building is situated. The greatest wealth of Ki Gumpa lies in its collection of 'Thangkas' salvaged with difficulty from the devastating raids of the Dogras and the Sikhs in the 19th century. At 4270M and 4205M height, Gete and Kibber are the two highest villages in Asia connected by road.

From Ki, a scenic drive takes you to **Kibber**, a small village. From Kibber, the pastures are spread over hundreds of square kilometers. Kibber is the take off point for the popular trek to Tso Moriri in Ladakh. Kibber also falls on the old route used over centuries by traders from trans-Himalayas to reach Spiti for an annual fair where traders from Spiti, Kinnaur, Ladakh and Tibet use to participate in.

Further up, six kilometers from Kibber, we drive up to a still smaller village of **Gete**. Consisting of just six houses, it boasts of being the highest village in Asia connected by road. The view from here of the whole Spiti valley is truly spectacular. There is also, for the willing and adventurous, a short-cut to Ki monastery that takes less than an hour (hiking).



Day 08: Kaza- Chandratat- Manali 270 kms/8-9 hrs drive and 2 hrs hike

Leave early today and drive towards Chandratat via Kunzum la. From Batal we take a short detour to drive to Chandratat (depending on weather and road conditions). Chandratat or moon lake is a stunningly beautiful lake situated at a height of more than 14000 ft. The lake changes colours according to sunlight/ daylight reflected from lake. Spend some time by the lake and head back. Hike back to the road and drive back to Batal and on to Manali. Reach Manali in the afternoon. Rest of the day at leisure in Manali. Night stay in hotel.

Chandratat - considered being source of Chandra River – the magnificent views of glacier and peaks of Mulkila & C.B. ranges can be seen. Do note though that it isn't always possible to drive all the way to the lake due to bad road. The Chandra River joins Bhaga River few kilometers down the valley and forms Chenab that later flows into Pakistan. Crystal clear water shadows the massive glaciers. Incredibly changing colors with the passage of day, peaceful and sublime, the lake is simply enchanting.



Day 09: Manali- Sojha 82 kms/ 3.5 hrs

A lazy and leisurely morning. After breakfast, we head out to Sojha via Naggat castle. Visit the castle and Roerich's art gallery. Roerich was a famous Russian artist and was married to our very own actress; Devika Rani.

Reach Sojha in the evening. Settle in to your rooms and enjoy views of thick forests and snow capped mountains once again. Evening around a bonfire.

Sojha (7342 ft.) - The thickly wooded mountainside, densely populated with conifers, deodars and toosh characterize the beauty and uniqueness of Shoja. With unending slopes of emerald forests, verdant and pristine, nature is at its most alluring. Located in Seraj valley, still undiscovered by many, Shoja is a breathtakingly beautiful place. The mornings in Shoja are particularly invigorating. One can just stroll around, walk up to the meadows or perhaps take the pathway into the jungle. Nature lovers can enjoy thick wooded hill slopes starting from bottom as far down or up or sideways or deep as one can look. One can see the great snow clad peaks beyond the tree line and some great cloud formations.



Day 10:

Sojha

Sojha is another stunningly beautiful hamlet flanked by Oak and Cedar forest. You could choose to relax at retreat, read, go for a short hike to the village else we drive up to Jalori pass (a short 5 km drive) and hike up to Raghupur fort (3 kms). Raghupur fort offers fantastic views of the valley. Hike back in time for lunch. Rest of the afternoon at leisure.

Day 11:

Drop at Chandigarh 250 kms/8-9 hrs

Post breakfast, drive to Chandigarh to get dropped at the airport/railway station.

Cost per person on twin share: INR 50500/-

Single Room supplement: INR 22000/-

Cost includes:

1. Accommodation on twin share with meals (morning tea, breakfast, lunch, evening tea and dinner)
2. Transport from Chandigarh- Chandigarh in Innova or similar.
3. Services of a guide for walks as per itinerary.
4. Wall climbing/ River Crossing/ Burma bridge in Sangla.
5. Service of a Banjara escort.
6. Service charges.
7. All applicable taxes.

Cost does not include:

1. Any beverages except those served on buffet table.
2. Any En route/ personal expenses.
3. Any expenses incurred due to factors beyond our control like a natural calamity/ man-made calamity.
4. Any air/rail fares.
5. Bottled mineral water (Aquaguard purified water is served free of cost at all our properties).

TOUR NOTES

Accommodation:

Thanedar: Retreat/Classic room at Banjara Orchard Retreat

Sangla:	Classic/Luxury tents at Banjara Camps & Retreat
Tabo:	Regular Deluxe Room at Dewachen Retreat or similar
Rangrik:	Deluxe Room at Grand Dewachen or similar
Manali:	Deluxe Room at Negi's Mayflower or similar
Sojha:	Cottage room at Banjara Retreat & Cottage

Food & Hygiene:

Food is a mix range of vegetarian/ non- vegetarian with a choice of Indian, Continental & Chinese food. All meals are buffet meals. There is no room service at most places.

Fitness:

You should be in good health if you wish to hike. Please take your doctor's advise if you are a heart patient, asthmatic, pregnant or suffer from epilepsy. Please note that you will have to climb down about 90 odd steps to reach the retreat.

Tipping & Portage:

We charge a service charge of 5% for the rooms. Tipping/ service charge is already taken care of in this trip. Our staff will carry your bags down to retreat and back up to car on day of departure.

Photography:

The retreat is at 7500 ft. and we will travel up to about 11000 ft. If you plan to take photos then please keep sunlight according to this altitude in mind. Please ask your guide before taking photographs inside any temple and if you plan to photograph any locals, please take their permission before doing so. You could charge your camera at the retreat.

Altitude Sickness:

Acclimatization to altitude above 3000 meters takes time. The body undergoes a number of physiological changes some of which are immediate like increased pulse rate & respiratory rate. These changes plus the effect of intense sunlight, walking & dehydration may cause loss of appetite, fatigue, headache, nausea, dizziness, sleeplessness, mild shortness of breath etc.

The best treatment is prevention! Avoid rapid ascents; take acclimatization symptoms seriously using rest days/Diamox tablets. If symptoms are severe, DESCEND IMMEDIATELY.

Medicine:

We keep a first aid kit. It would be anyway a good idea to bring your own basic first aid kit with medicines for motion sickness, nausea, some painkillers etc. Please carry sun block and chapstick. Keep your face, feet and hands well protected. Request your doctor to prescribe effective medicines to cover the following: Fever, Body and joint pains, Cold, Cough, Sore throat, Headache, Acidity, Stomach cramps, Vomiting, Dysentery, Loose motion, Constipation, Diarrhea, Swelling, Muscle Pulls & Sore eyes. We do carry a first aid box though. In case you have any illness of any sort, please do inform us in advance so that we can take necessary precaution. You could also carry vaseline, Band Aid, Cotton, Badge roll, Dettol, Mouth freshener, Nose inhaler, Cough drops, Lip balm, Vicks, Elastoplasts, Adhesive tape, 4" crepe bandage.

List of things to bring:

1. Duffel bag (avoid suitcases if you can)
2. A small day backpack to carry water, food, jacket and camera
3. Hiking shoes- you need good traction in shoes and these should be at least water resistant. Forclaz 500 is a good. Your shoes should be well broken-in and not new. Otherwise, your regular sports shoes will also do.
4. 2 pairs of lowers.
5. 4-5 full sleeves T-shirts
6. A fleece jacket
7. A full sleeve thick jacket
8. Underclothing
9. 1 pairs of thermal inners
10. 2-3 pairs of sports socks. 2 pairs of woolen socks
11. Woolen cap/ balaclava that covers the ears
12. Gloves
13. Sun glasses
14. Lip balm
15. Cold cream and sun screen lotion (SPF 40+).
16. Water bottle.
17. Flash light
18. Personal toilet kit.
19. Personal medicine
20. Small repair kit consisting of safety pins, needle, thread and string.
21. Camera, memory-cards, batteries etc (carry enough spare batteries. Electricity is not available on the slopes.

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE TO USE A LOT OF WOOLENS LISTED ABOVE BUT, WEATHER IN THE HIMALAYAS CAN BE RATHER UNPREDICTABLE HENCE, BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY.

BOOKING, PAYMENT AND CANCELLATION POLICY

CONFIRMATION:

100% advance to confirm booking.

CANCELLATION CHARGE:

Minimum : 20% of full amount.
Less than two weeks of arrival date (or tour start date) : 50% of full amount.
Less than one week of arrival date (or tour start date) : Full amount.

PAYMENT MODES & METHODS:

1. **ONLINE TRANSFER** into our **current** accounts in **Axis Bank or Standard Chartered Bank**
2. **DIRECT CHEQUE DEPOSIT** into our **current** accounts in **Axis Bank or Standard Chartered Bank** at any branch/ ATM in India
3. **DIRECT CASH DEPOSIT**, into our **current** account at any branch in India
4. By **CASH** or **CHEQUE** handed over personally (or by your rep) **AT OUR DELHI OFFICE**
5. **OUTSTATION CHEQUE** payments are acceptable **only if** they are delivered (or we get a scan of the bank deposit slip) at least **4 working days** before the payment due date.
6. **OUTSTATION PAYMENTS** by a **Payable at Delhi** DD sent to our **Delhi Office** by courier/post.

IMP: CHEQUE / DD to be made in **favour of "Banjara Camps & Retreats Pvt. Ltd."**

AXIS BANK:

- A/c name : Banjara Camps & Retreats Pvt. Ltd.
- A/c no. : **015010200017806**
- Branch address : K-12; Green Park Main; New Delhi - 110016
- Branch Code : UTIB0000015 (for direct cheque deposit)
- IFSC Code : UTIB0000015 (**for online transfer**)

STANDARD CHARTERED BANK:

- A/c name : Banjara Camps & Retreats Pvt. Ltd.
- A/c no. : **525-0-509-319-3**
- Branch address : 10 Sansad Marg; New Delhi - 110 001
- Branch Code : SCBL0036027 (for direct cash/ cheque deposit)
- IFSC Code: : SCBL0036027 (**for online transfer**)

DETAILS BY CURRENCY FOR O.T.T. /WIRE TRANSFER & DIRECT DEPOSIT:

In Favour of: "Banjara Camps & Retreats Pvt. Ltd. "

1) USD

Bank: Standard Chartered Bank
Branch: 10, Sansad Marg, New Delhi- 110001
IFSC Code: SCBL0036027
Swift code: SCB-LINBBDEL
EEFC A/c No. : 525-0-509421-1

2) GBP

Bank: Standard Chartered Bank
Branch: 10, Sansad Marg, New Delhi- 110001
IFSC Code: SCBL0036027
Swift code: SCB-LINBBDEL
EEFC A/c No. : 525-0-509430-0
IBAN NO: GB42SCBL60910451997017

3) EURO

Bank: Standard Chartered Bank
Branch: 10, Sansad Marg, New Delhi- 110001
IFSC Code: SCBL0036027
Swift code: SCB-LINBBDEL
EEFC A/c No. : 525-0-509426-2
IBAN NO: GB41SCBL60910457083521

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