

A Guide to Himachal

This 7-day Himalayan loop takes you deep into the heart of **Kinnaur**, where pine forests give way to plunging river gorges, and apple orchards stretch beneath snow-capped peaks. From the quiet charm of Sangla to the frontier village of Chitkul and the sacred ridges of Kalpa, this circuit is a blend of culture, altitude, and raw mountain beauty — all wrapped into one unforgettable drive.

Trip Overview

Duration: 7 Days

Best Season: April to mid-November (*Chitkul accessible; apple season peaks Aug–Oct*)

Total Distance: ~850–900 km

Vehicle Type: SUV / High Clearance

Difficulty: Moderate (*narrow roads, cliff sections, altitude gain*)

Permits: No permits required for Indian nationals; foreign nationals need ILP for Chitkul (can be arranged in Reckong Peo)

Mobile Network: Jio, Airtel, BSNL in towns; patchy or no signal in Sangla–Chitkul stretch

Fuel Planning: Reliable pumps in Shimla, Rampur, Peo; top up before Sangla–Chitkul leg

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Shimla → Narkanda → Rampur

- **Distance/Time:** ~130 km | 5–6 hrs
 - **Highlights:** Hatu Peak detour, apple orchards, Satluj river views
 - **Adventure:** Short hike to Hatu Peak (3,400 m)
 - **Stay:** Rampur or Jeori
 - **Tip:** Start early to enjoy Narkanda's morning light
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Day 2: Rampur → Karcham → Sangla

- **Distance/Time:** ~100 km | 4–5 hrs
- **Highlights:** Cliff-hugging roads, Baspa river valley, Karcham dam
- **Adventure:** Riverside walk in Sangla; trout fishing (seasonal)
- **Stay:** Sangla (2,600 m)

A Guide to Himachal

- **Caution:** Narrow roads; drive slow near Karcham gorge
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Day 3: Sangla → Chitkul → return Sangla

- **Distance/Time:** ~40 km round trip | 2–3 hrs
 - **Highlights:** Chitkul — last village before Indo-Tibet border; wooden homes, river meadows
 - **Adventure:** Walk along the Baspa river trail; visit ITBP checkpoint (if permitted)
 - **Stay:** Sangla
 - **Tip:** Carry snacks; limited food options in Chitkul
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Day 4: Sangla → Reckong Peo → Kalpa

- **Distance/Time:** ~50 km | 2–3 hrs
 - **Highlights:** Kinnaur Kailash views, Kalpa monastery, Roghi cliff viewpoint
 - **Adventure:** Sunset walk to suicide point (Roghi ridge)
 - **Stay:** Kalpa (2,960 m)
 - **Tip:** Best views are early morning and golden hour
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Day 5: Kalpa exploration

- **Highlights:** Kalpa village walk, apple orchards, Narayan Nagini temple
 - **Adventure:** Short hike to Chaka Meadows (moderate, 2–3 hrs round trip)
 - **Stay:** Kalpa
 - **Tip:** Try local Himachali siddu and chutney
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Day 6: Kalpa → Sarahan

- **Distance/Time:** ~100 km | 4–5 hrs
- **Highlights:** Bhimakali Temple, bird sanctuary, pine forests
- **Adventure:** Temple architecture walk; birdwatching (seasonal)
- **Stay:** Sarahan (2,300 m)

A Guide to Himachal

- **Tip:** Temple entry requires modest attire
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Day 7: Sarahan → Shimla

- **Distance/Time:** ~170 km | 6–7 hrs
 - **Highlights:** Satluj valley descent, apple belt views
 - **Adventure:** Optional detour to Rampur hot springs
 - **Stay:** Shimla (trip end)
 - **Tip:** Reach by evening for sunset at The Ridge
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Essentials to Carry

- **Documents:** DL, RC, insurance, ID proofs; ILP for foreign nationals (Chitkul)
 - **Clothing:** Warm layers, windproof jacket, rain gear (monsoon season)
 - **Footwear:** Trekking shoes, sandals for riverside walks
 - **Health:** Basic meds, altitude sickness tablets (if sensitive), ORS
 - **Gear:** Power banks, torch, offline maps, camera, snacks
 - **Misc:** Sunglasses, SPF 50+, lip balm, reusable water bottle
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Permits, Fuel & Checkpoints

- **Permits:**
 - Indian nationals: No permits required
 - Foreign nationals: ILP needed for Chitkul (apply in Reckong Peo)
- **Fuel:**
 - Reliable pumps: Shimla, Rampur, Reckong Peo
 - Top up before Sangla–Chitkul leg
- **Checkpoints:**
 - ITBP post near Chitkul (entry may be restricted)
 - Local police checks near Peo and Sarahan
- **Timing Tips:**

A Guide to Himachal

- Start early for Sangla–Chitkul to avoid afternoon traffic
- Avoid driving after dark between Karcham and Sangla

Insider Tips

- **Best season:** August–October for apple harvest; April–June for clear skies
- **Photography:** Chitkul’s wooden homes and Kalpa’s sunrise ridge are unbeatable
- **Local eats:** Try rajma-chawal in Sangla and siddu in Kalpa
- **Eco-ethic:** No littering in river zones; avoid plastic bottles
- **Road caution:** Karcham–Sangla stretch is narrow and cliff-bound — drive slow and steady

Route Map Overview (Text)

Shimla → Narkanda → Rampur → Karcham → Sangla → Chitkul → Sangla → Reckong Peo → Kalpa → Sarahan → Shimla